Participant and Institutional Identity: Self-representation Across Multiple Genres at a Catholic College

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Abstract

This qualitative research project, informed by ethnographic and feminist research methodologies, focuses on how students negotiate various genres with which they come in contact. Through the close analysis of a small, religious-affiliated, liberal arts college, this study examines how students' constructs of "self" are reflected in school genres and how their backgrounds, specific academic disciplines, and institutional goals affect those constructs. In order to conduct this analysis, activity theory is used to examine possible competing goals within the activity system (the college itself) and, in turn, how those goals can affect student writing. Since participant identity is an issue of activity systems, I examine identity through self-representation, as it has been theorized in autobiography studies. Combining activity theory and theories of self-representation and performance, I create a framework to explore how genres can simultaneously liberate and constrain and how students negotiate the various tensions they may encounter within an activity system.

> I identified myself completely with [my professor]…. I readily imitated his writing, took up in succession his pet phrases, adopted his tastes, his judgments, even imitated his voice and tender inflections, and in my papers presented him with an exact image of himself. (1993, p. 80)
>
> Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever*

> …individuals bring many motives to a collective interaction, and the division of labor in the system itself guarantees diversity. Dissensus, resistance, conflicts, and deep contradictions are constantly produced in activity systems. (1997, p. 511)
>
> David Russell, Rethinking Genre in School and Society

> …genres must be fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely….The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them. (1986, p. 80)
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin, The Problem of Speech Genres

Students often identify with their professors. When they do, they may imitate their professors out of admiration or out of motivation to be "successful" in school. Some students merely imitate, yet some students "master" a discourse sufficiently enough to reveal their own contribution to that discourse, moving beyond a mere imitation.[1] But as David Russell suggests, there are any

number of motivations for participating in discourses (or activity systems) in particular ways. In this study, I offer a way to examine participant identity, through self-representation, that might reveal what motivations are at play when writers participate in activities within discourses. Recent studies such as Newkirk's *The Performance of Self in Student Writing* and Herrington and Curtis' *Persons in Process* attest the significance of personal identity when negotiating academic discourse. My work furthers their discussions by providing a framework, based on a combination of activity theory and autobiography theory, that can help us reveal the kinds of issues of identity writers encounter as they enter into academic discourse.

In this study, I look specifically to the resistance, contradictions, and conflicts in writing to reveal the ways that motivation and individual identity can shape the writing that participants do. I highlight three case studies, Amy, Patrick, and Layla, who, as they situated their selves within the larger system of their college, were also situating their selves within the spoken and written genres of the classroom. I examine the ways that these students (i.e., participants) appropriate particular self-representations (as they do genres [Russell, 1997]) and explore what they might reveal about participant negotiation of a system and the genres within that system.

As writers engage genres within complex systems, they are also in the process of situating their selves within those genres. Consequently, writers are also in the process of situating themselves within the activity systems that drive those genres. In this chapter, I examine how gaining "command of genres" allows for writers to shape their identities. More specifically, I ask in what ways do writers represent their selves as they situate themselves within an activity system? What might studying writers' self-representations of that process reveal to us in terms of genres and activity systems? And what might the implications be for our own teaching?

Russell uses activity theory to help us connect writing to wider social practices and to subsequently rethink such issues as agency, task-representation, and assessment (504). In his description of activity and genre systems, Russell explains how agency can be examined through participant identity and the significance of this examination to the overall conception of an activity system. In this project, I propose to learn about a writer's—that is, a participant's—identity by examining that writer's self-representation. By learning about a writer's identity as she represents herself in the various genres of the activity system, we can in turn determine ways the institution's identity drives, or is driven by, the writer's identity. Through a systematic analysis of self-representation, I suggest that the complexities of participant identity and consequently activity systems can be better understood. That is, my method of examining self-representation offers us a way to examine participant identity within activity systems.

Within activity theory research, genre has received special attention (Berkenkotter & Ravotas, 1997; Winsor, 1999; Bazerman, 1994; Russell, 1997). Genres mediate cultural and historical activities within systems and therefore the study of genre can reveal the ways in which writing within genres not only serves to stabilize an activity system, but also the ways in which writing might resist and consequently change that system. Furthermore, genre has been theorized as a tool. That is, genres are used by participants to "carr[y] out" the work of the system. (Berkenkotter, 2001, p.327). I will suggest that just as genre is used as a generative tool, so too is

self-representation, within and among genres, a tool. By examining self-representation as a sub-tool of genre, we can identify the ways that genre is both liberating and constraining and consequently how genres can constitute identities within activity systems.

Participant negotiation of genre and, therefore, of identity, are issues to be addressed to determine how an activity system can be stabilized and/or changed by the participants (who engage the genres). Similarly, the ways that activity systems can shape participant identities as they in engage in the system's genres is also an important issue. While some researchers (Prior, 1994; Berkenkotter and Ravatos, 1997) in composition studies have begun to examine this issue, I suggest a more systematic way of examining participant identity. Since participant identity is an issue of activity systems, I examine identity through self-representation, as it has been theorized in autobiography studies. Combining activity theory and theories of self-representation, I create a framework to explore how genre can simultaneously liberate and constrain and how writers negotiate the various tensions they may encounter within an activity system.

To examine self-representation across the genres of an activity system, I studied the wide range of genre systems at a small, private, Catholic-affiliated college, using the college as a whole as the unit of analysis. My study, informed by ethnographic and case study methodology, examines the activities of the college, which I call St. Augustine College, to better understand the ways that genres can constitute identities within activity systems. To address the broader questions I posed earlier about activity systems, I asked the following research questions specific to this research site:

- In what ways do students experience a "double bind" (Russell, 1997) or tension or contradiction where demands are placed on them by competing motives of the various activity systems they encounter? How then, do students negotiate these competing motives within the genres they encounter at their academic institution? In turn, are students' identities transformed, and if so, how?

- How is the activity system of St. Augustine College stabilized and/or changed based on the ways that students negotiate the various competing motives within this activity system (which is itself comprised of several systems)?

As I studied the students, teachers, and administrators at St. Augustine, I found that students negotiated and resisted both genres and activity systems in different ways. Their own motivations, interests, and backgrounds affected those negotiations and the ways they proceeded through them. These factors were part of students' senses of self before they entered college, and they intertwine with students' responses to instructors, particular courses, and the institution itself. Therefore, as I conducted systematic observations and interviews within this complex system, and analyzed the various genres that students encountered there, the following questions emerged:

- How does student self-representation vary within and among genres at St. Augustine College?

- What does this variance reveal in terms of the work completed at St. Augustine?

As I examined the multiple genres students encountered at St. Augustine College, I paid particular attention to the tensions and contradictions within their self-representations. Before describing the research site further, I will first explain my theoretical approach to data analysis.

Self-Representation As a Method of Analysis in Activity Theory

My analytical method combines activity theory, feminist autobiography theory, and performance theory in order to examine the participants' identities within a particular system. As I have suggested, theories of self-representation can be used to systematically examine participant identity. However, it may not be immediately clear how self-representation fits into activity theory. Within activity theory, the relationship between the subject and the object is mediated by a tool (See Figure 1). In other words, people use tools (or resources) to help them accomplish certain goals. The tools mediate an activity in that they define how persons construct their participation within a particular activity. In this way, a tool's meaning or function is only valid when put in context by a participant. Moreover, a tool is simultaneously enabling and limiting: It empowers the participant through its past use by other participants, but it also restricts participants in that the tool has already been defined in terms of its functionality and materiality. This does not mean, however, that either is mutually exclusive. The function of a tool exists on a continuum; the degree to which it is limiting/enabling depends on the context of the activity.

All activity systems encounter conflict and tension, usually where the limiting and enabling factors meet. This idea is similar to Bakhtin's notion that tension lies where the limiting and enabling factors meet in an utterance. Whenever conflict or tension arises within an activity system, genres serve as coping tools. Familiar genres provide predictable, or typified (Miller, 1994) ways to frame an action, thereby making action the social "glue for mending the tension" (Beach 1998, p. 4). Learning and constructing familiar genres also involves learning and constructing familiar self-representations. As stated earlier, self-representation is an important sub-issue of genre. In the same way that genre functions as a tool for mediating the goals of participants within an activity system, self-representation functions as a "sub-tool", that is, a tool operating within the tool of genre, for mediating the discourses of identity and the discourses of power (see Figure 1).

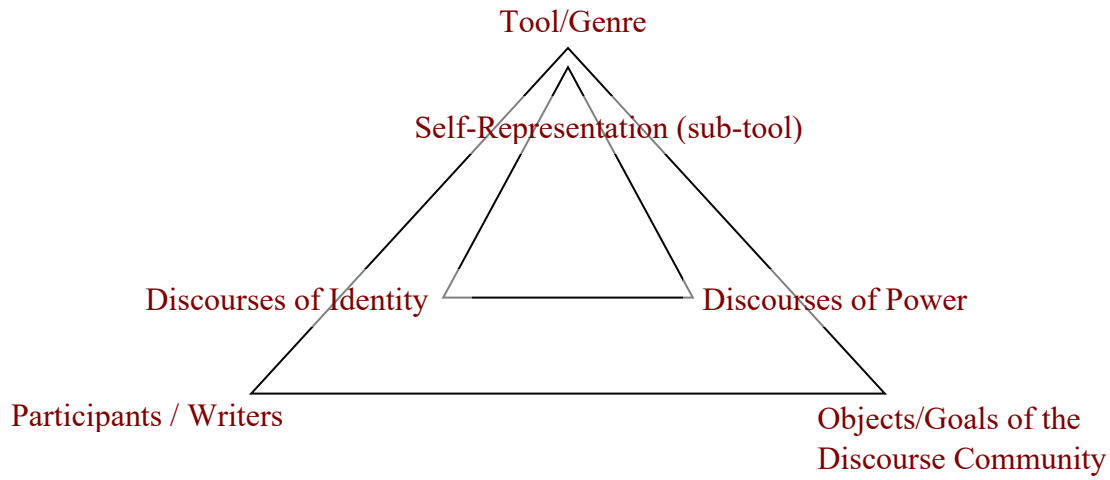

Figure 1: Self-representation: A sub-tool (of genre) mediating the discourses of identity and the discourses of power

In this figure, I've superimposed my notion of self-representation onto a modification of Engeström's activity theory triangle (1988). The tools (or genres) mediate the actions of participants as they work toward particular goals. The inner triangle represents self-representation as a "sub-tool" within the tool of genre. My research site—the college itself and the individual courses offered—represent the discourses of power (within an activity system). The discourses of identity are represented by the ways students revealed their selves through their writings and interactions with teachers, administrators, the researcher, friends, and families. Writers negotiate genre (and consequently the discourses of power driving a genre) and the construction of their identity(s) through this sub-tool of self-representation. Therefore, my definition of self-representation is:

> The performance of the rhetorical construction of self where self is continually shifting based on generic expectation and where discourses of power come in contact with discourses of identity.

In this following section, I describe how recent theories of autobiography and specifically strategies of self-representation provide a way to analyze the various ways writers represent their selves within discourse.

Strategies of Self-Representation

In creating a framework for examining self-representation, I draw on feminist autobiography theory, and performance theory. Each of these theories are closely related and combined provide an analytical frame for examining self-representation. In feminist autobiography theory, self-representation is a primary issue. As autobiography theorists Sidonie Smith and Leigh Gilmore suggest, the conscious representation of self within a genre is directly tied to the writer's notion and awareness of that genre, the audience of that genre, and the way that the writer wishes to construct and represent her self within that genre. As writers attempt to enter into a particular

discourse, they gradually learn to "perform" the particular generic conventions of that discourse, imitating the conventions that are useful to them, and pushing the boundaries of those conventions that limit them. When a writer performs a genre such as autobiography, she imitates the discursive notions of that genre while simultaneously recognizing the limitations of that genre to fully represent her life.[2]

My examination of self-representation relies heavily on theories of autobiography and performance.[3] Similarly, some composition theorists have begun to examine self-representation as a performance. For instance, Thomas Newkirk's recent work has addressed self-presentation in personal or autobiographical writing.[4] Newkirk draws on Goffman's social notion of self-presentation, not autobiography, to examine the construction of self in personal writing. Newkirk says that in writing assignments where the personal is asked for, teachers have implicit assumptions of the kind of self a student performs in that assignment. He sees "being 'personal' as not some natural 'free' representation of self, but as a complex cultural performance" (1997, p. xii).[5] Autobiography theorists have also theorized self-representation, focusing specifically on the postmodern subject. Within the various forms that autobiography takes, theorists have found that the subject is dynamic and changing over time, historically situated, and positioned within multiple discourses (Foucault, 1982; Hutcheon, 1989; Butler, 1990). Based on this definition of the subject, feminist theorists of autobiography have examined the various "dimensions" of self-representation, including politics, materiality, discourses, and technologies (Gilmore, 1994), suggesting several methodologies for studying self-representation. These approaches for studying self-representation include three dominant strategies employed by autobiography writers: reproducing discourse, resisting discourse, and negotiating discourse. These categories, therefore, represent the ways writers engage in genre and self-representation. In analyzing participant identity, then, I used these categories to organize the various genres produced within the system. As I describe examples of writing from my research site, I will elaborate each of the categories.

Both autobiography theorists and Newkirk have focused on personal writing. My definition of self-representation, however, extends those of autobiography theorists and Newkirk to allow for the examination of self-representation across multiple genres, to see the ways in which discourses of identities come in contact with discourses of power. I propose, then, that theories of self-representation can be used to examine *all writing*, not just that which is explicitly personal. Self-representation is not a mere imitation of culturally accepted codes, but rather is a performance that can serve to critique hegemonic discourse. Further, viewing genre and consequently self-representation as performance provides the subject with agency. Participants are not only acted upon; they are also actively engaging in discourse and negotiating it in various ways. Using theories of self-representation, we can see the ways in which culture, language, and discourse have been critiqued or resisted by writers. I consequently suggest that participant identity within activity systems can be examined through self-representation in order to learn what control writers have over their own self-constructions. In addition, this examination can help writers negotiate the multiple and complex constructions of their selves as they attempt to enter into a particular discourse within an activity system.

St. Augustine College As an Activity System

This chapter is based on ethnographic and case study analysis to study how participant identity affects institutional identity (and vice versa) through the analysis of activity systems. It draws on material from a yearlong study of students, teachers, and administrators, all participants within a larger activity system. (Powell, 2000) [6] The activity system I investigated, St. Augustine College, provides a unique institutional and educational space in which to explore the issues of self-representation and genre. For instance, the course catalogue states that St. Augustine College, despite recent changes in the college's curriculum, "remains true to its mission as a Catholic liberal arts college, a mission in which excellence in teaching and learning is central, in which the intrinsic value of each individual is affirmed, and in which students are encouraged to develop their God-given gifts, not only for their own sakes, but to serve others and the community." The administrator/teacher who wrote the latest edition of the course catalogue, himself a priest, was committed to representing the college's identity as one that held values of openness and intellect, together with values of spirituality and faith. These values, however, can be interpreted differently by students, faculty, and staff, which makes St. Augustine an interesting place for "ethical, moral, philosophical, and religious" discussion. While the institution is dedicated to its history and identity in Catholicism, it is equally committed to diversity and intellectual exchange. In addition to these goals, service and connection to the community are emphasized, a feature attractive to many students and their parents. As a research site, therefore, St. Augustine can be explored in terms of how student writing connects to "broader social systems" (Russell, 1997, p. 504). Specifically, this study's interest lies in how the institutional identity is represented through writing that students do and their individual representations of identity. As I observed classes, interviewed students and teachers, and analyzed the multiple genres of the system, I realized that students encounter "dialectical contradictions" as various factors pulled them in "different directions" (Russell, 1997, p. 52). As expectations of school, friends, and family (representating the goals of various activity systems) collided, students faced tensions as they attempted to negotiate competing goals. Student identity, then, across the multiple genres they encountered, revealed a complex web of relationships which students negotiated in equally complex ways.

Located in a mid-western, mid-sized city, St. Augustine is physically situated in the middle of one of the city's middle-class neighborhoods. Most students are white and middle-class with academic scholarships, and approximately 25 % of the students graduated from private high schools in the area, and there is little ethnic, racial, or religious diversity.[7]

Because of its size (1,843 undergraduates in 1997), it was easier for me to gain a sense of the college as a whole.[8] I was therefore more readily able to draw conclusions about how individual writing reveals the work conducted in this setting and how that work challenges and fulfills institutional goals. This site, with its small size and narrowly defined institutional goals (as a Catholic-affiliated college), is conducive to an exploration of the kinds of questions I raised about self-representation, genre, and activity systems.

Established in 1950, St. Augustine was originally a men's college with a faculty consisting primarily of priests. In 1968, St. Augustine merged with a Catholic women's college and in the same year, the college's governing board became legally independent of the city's Roman Catholic Archdiocese. According to one professor who wrote the college's history, while St. Augustine's "origins in Catholicism have always played a vital role in the college's identity, its public image today is broad and inclusive." In 1950, only two students were non-Catholics, but today, the student body represents many different religions (although the student body remains 60 % Catholic). Similarly, the college is committed to a diverse faculty. So while the institution is dedicated to its history and identity in Catholicism, it is equally committed to diversity and intellectual exchange.

Reproduction, Resistance, and Knowledgeable Resistance: Three Case Studies

When I began studying participants' self-representation, I expected to find that less experienced writers would reproduce dominant discourses, then gradually move toward resisting dominant discourse, then toward negotiating that tension as they became more experienced writers and college students. What I found, however, was that students were in constant negotiation of the discourses of power and the discourses of identity. My examination revealed that students' identities were inextricably linked to their engagement with particular classes, teachers, and the institution itself. In addition, students engaged in genres differently, not because of lack of knowledge, but because of any number of personal factors. The following sections highlight the major strategies of self-representation and the various ways that students represented themselves within the genres they were asked to engage in at school and how those representations exhibit the constant exchange between participant and institutional identity.

In the following sections, I highlight three case studies. One case study, Amy, is a first-year student in a first-year seminar class called "Popular Culture." The other two case studies are of students who were taking an introductory philosophy course. Patrick was a fifth-year senior in the course, and Layla was a sophomore. Amy, Patrick, and Layla are in some ways representative of the students I interviewed and observed for this project. But each exhibited particular negotiations of school that clearly illustrate the notions of reproduction, resistance, and knowledgeable resistance. In addition, I highlight these particular case studies because of their very different approaches to college, to classes, and to their writing in general. Because I was analyzing St. Augustine as a system, I include these students, at various stages in their college careers, and in various courses, to provide a sense of the college as a whole, rather than focus on one class or one student. Through these three case studies, across courses and student experience, I will show how different students respond to various aspects of the system, as revealed through their self-representations. Although I've placed each case study into one of the three different strategies of self-representation I'm highlighting, it is important to note that none of these categories is static or mutually exclusive. Each student discussed here, and most of the students I studied, revealed each strategy in varying degrees. I place these three students in these categories

to highlight the various differences, then to problematize the categories as we question the notion of self-representation.

Reproduction: Matching the Teacher's Expectations

Amy, a first-year student, revealed that she was an interested student, willing to participate in her courses and in relationships with other students, teachers, and me. She said she wanted to get "good grades;" she liked school for the most part; and she worked "pretty hard" in all her classes. She was very much like Sperling and Freeman's "good girl," working toward success in school and doing what was expected of her in terms of her classes, school, church, and family. She believed that her professors were good people and she wanted to be part of the community, to do what was necessary to be part of that broader community of school. Part of Amy's active commitment to school came from her familial background. Amy described her parents as loving and supportive. As a family they attended Catholic mass, and she discussed how her parents encouraged her application to St. Augustine so she could continue to be part of a Catholic community. "We always knew to do what we were told," Amy said. "Not in a bad way, like we'll get punished or anything. But like we just knew, do things right." Amy's participation in school reflected this philosophy, to do what her professors asked of her—she assumed doing so would bring her success in school.

The English course Amy attended and that I observed was taught by Dr. Linda Hassan, who introduced students to issues of popular culture by discussing movies, advertisements, music, sports, technology, and television. For the most part, students were very engaged in serious class discussions while Dr. Hassan also maintained a light-hearted atmosphere in the classroom. Part of the goal of this class, a first-year seminar, was to introduce students to a seminar atmosphere where they are active participants in their own learning. Therefore, most of the course involved group discussion where students were expected to generate questions and comments about the readings and the overall topics of popular culture.

Class discussion as a genre. Dr. Hassan asked students to develop discussion questions online (they had an online class folder) and in small groups to help her generate discussion and "to get them to learn how to take responsibility for the class." Amy actively participated in the class discussion and was concerned that the conversation in the class "went well." If other students did not respond to Dr. Hassan's questions, Amy would look around the room, pause, then proceed to answer the questions to get the discussion "moving along." She even claimed, "I don't want to be the one talking all the time but I don't want it to be dead in there either." Amy would often start the class in its discussion. In the following example, for instance, Amy is the first to respond to Dr. Hassan's question about rap lyrics. The students had read an essay on rap music, discussed it in small groups, and were to report their findings to the class.

> Ok. Um, we found that it was interesting about who they're [rap musicians] selling to, like why it's suburban white males and we think that it was because it's just like we're eavesdropping on the black community because we don't like know a whole lot of what's goin' on. Like a roller coaster, like a

> controlled veer. Like, if you just buy a CD then nothin's gonna happen to you. As opposed to like, you wouldn't just like go to the ghetto just to see what's goin' on. And also like, well I was offended…just because I thought it was kind of harsh in one of the things in here. But, [looks at Dr. Hassan] do you want me to read it? Ok, it's pretty harsh…well you'll hear it. [Reads from the textbook] It says, "I'm thinking to myself why did I bang her. Now I'm in the closet lookin' for the hanger." Ok, like…I think it, well...I mean, I don't know if this is right, but I was thinking that when it said "looking for the hanger" that like, abortion. But I don't know. And, I don't…that was just kind of gross when I thought about it.

Her oral discourse is informal; she doesn't edit out the "you know" and "like." These are the same speech patterns she used with her friends, and she said that she was trying to talk like a "real" person. "Dr. Hassan wants us to be, you know, comfortable with each other," she said. At the beginning of this passage, Amy represents herself as engaged in the text. Dr. Hassan has often stated in class that she wants students to read the texts closely and seriously. Amy's reference to the roller coaster repeats the metaphor used by the authors, indicating her familiarity with the text. Then she restates the metaphor using her own words. In terms of the genre of the class discussion, Amy is following a convention she has not only seen Dr. Hassan employ herself, but also that she told students directly that she wants them to use. Therefore, Amy refers directly to the text, then analyzes it in her own words. Consequently, she is representing a self that is engaged in the text.

Toward the middle of her discussion, after she's read from the text, Amy represents her self as offended by the lyrics because they were "harsh." Following the text itself, she states that she realizes the lyrics are referring to abortion. It is at this point in her discussion that she's not quite sure what to do with her analysis. She says the word "gross," but it is not clear whether she means that the type of abortion is gross (via a hanger), the abortion itself, the abortion forced on a woman by a man, or the representation of sex as a "bang." Amy is aware that in this genre the dominant discourse of the class discussion is to be engaged with the text as a learner. Dr. Hassan often tells the class, "I want you to learn about…." However, in terms of the content of the discussion—that is of abortion, sex, possibly violence—Amy is unsure what the dominant discourse of the class might be. She therefore repeats several times, "I don't know" as a way to indicate her uncertainty. She wants to be engaged with the text, analyze it as she understands Dr. Hassan wants her to; however, she's not sure how to do it and still be within the dominant discourse of the class. Amy, while on the one hand wants to represent herself to the teacher as an engaged learner, is also very aware of how the other students in the class and perceive her. Her hesitation in further analysis is also influenced by her lack of knowledge about her entire audience: her teacher and her peers.

The journal and a shift in audience. Later in the semester, Dr. Hassan asked students to reflect in their class journals on the topics of sports and music and what they've learned by reading articles on these topics. In Amy's journal, where she knows that Dr. Hassan is her only reader, she says:

> I have learned a lot about our culture through the two categories of sports and music. I learned that there are many ways our American "pop culture" is

> divided. One thing that really bothered me was the fact that blacks are the majority in the NFL and NBA but, there are so few black coaches. I never even thought about this before, but it just seems so wrong to me.

As Amy does in the class discussion, she represents her self here also as a learner, someone engaged in the class and the readings. She also restates the question almost verbatim: "about our culture through the two categories of sports and music." This repetition reveals that Amy has a particular expectation of the genre of the journal. She told me that she restates the question "because that's what I learned in high school, so that [Dr. Hassan] knows which question I'm answering." In addition, she says that part of what she learned about the inequalities in sports "bothered" her. In this way, Amy is agreeing with the dominant discourse of the class. After a long discussion on the topic, Dr. Hassan summed it up by saying, "That seems quite unfair to me." Amy, who is committed to representing herself as an engaged student, and who sees that being an engaged student means "learning" what Dr. Hassan has to say, therefore says in her journal that she was also bothered by what she learned. She represented herself as aware of the issue and that she should be bothered by it and willing to accept the conclusions that Dr. Hassan draws about the reading and the class discussion. In this way, Amy reproduced the dominant discourse of the class. She wanted Dr. Hassan to know that she aligns herself with the dominant discourse of the class; that is, that racial discrimination is wrong. Later in the same reflection, she wrote,

> I also thought the music articles forced me to consider the affects [sic] of music. What are the differences between "black" and "white" music? I don't think I can listen to rap music the same way anymore. I wouldn't want to know I was helping promote a song [that] young black girls were listening to it [sic], and it was degrading females. I think sports and music are large windows into our society. They reflect that we may say everyone is equal, but it is clearly not felt by everyone.

Again, Amy repeated what the instructor said in class. Dr. Hassan said several times that the topics they discuss, like sports and music, are "windows" into the culture at large. Amy was engaged with the discussion in class, and in this genre of in-class writing

Reproducing discourse through a struggle with genre. In another genre, Amy represented an engaged self, and that is also an attempt to represent a critical self. As we might expect, Amy uses more formal discourse in her research paper, an analysis of a popular culture icon. Students were to choose an icon and speculate, in terms of popular culture, why that figure has reached iconic status. According to Amy, Oprah is so popular because "she relates to the audience and makes them part of her world by being open about her own life." When Amy received Dr. Hassan's response to her first draft on Oprah, there were several places where Dr. Hassan suggested that she make changes. For instance, when Dr. Hassan asked for more authority for this statement, "It can't be disputed that 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' appeals primarily to females and I think she has tapped into what women want to see on television," Amy revised her draft by adding, "It is proven that women and men communicate in different ways." In addition, when

Dr. Hassan asked for an example for the statement, "Audience members feel like they really know her through her actions and how she says things," Amy added, "For example, if you watch the show you know her voices, the playful Oprah as opposed to the angry Oprah, and the viewers know the difference." In Dr. Hassan's marginal comments, she is trying to get Amy to be more critical and analytical about the icon she's chosen, to analyze the culture at large and more particularly Oprah's popularity.

In as much as Amy understood the genre of the research paper, she attempted to fulfill the generic expectations. She was willing to revise, but is unsure, in terms of genre, in what way she should represent her own authority: that is, the research she's conducted (or not). Through her revision, she represented herself as willing to revise, willing to engage in the comments that Dr. Hassan gave her paper. However, because Amy was still learning the genre, still learning what it means to think critically, she was not quite sure how to do it and therefore inserts a generality that's neither appropriate nor conclusive. She did, however, attempt to do what she thinks Dr. Hassan wanted her to do. When she tried to do only what the teacher wants, she uncritically reproduced the dominant discourse. Dr. Hassan's goal was to have her more critically analyze. Amy's goal is to do what the teacher wants, but is unable to discern that producing her own critical analysis is her teacher's goal.

As Amy sought to construct an identity that was engaged with school, she struggled with how that identity didn't seem to always "match" what Dr. Hassan (or some of her other teachers) wanted. Amy's family was working class—her father ran a boat repair shop and her mother "helped with the books." According to Julie Lindquist, the "discourse of inquiry" can often be resisted by working class students because of the complexities of social and economic value placed on such "speculative rhetoric" (1999, p.228). Amy herself did not want to resist her teachers or their assignments. Her unified identity as a good student seemed to clash with the rhetorical task of "critically analyzing" within the genre of the research paper.

Amy's self-representation in the genres for this course and in the genres in her other classes were relatively consistent. That is, she reproduced the genres the way she interpreted her teachers wanted her to. If she didn't know how to or received a poor grade, she then discussed the genre with the teacher, again representing herself in the student/teacher conference that she was an engaged student. Amy was in the process of learning generic convention, only able to reproduce the dominant discourse of the class, and therefore not making significant changes to Dr. Hassan's course, objectives, or overall pedagogy. By examining Amy's self-representation in relation to her identity and the discourse of power in a classroom where critical analysis is valued, we can see the ways that participants within a system can experience conflicts within that system.

Resistance: Participating without results

Amy's engagement with the popular culture class, its genres, and the instructor, were marked by relatively few instances of resistance. She subtly resisted some of the content of the course, but generally, Amy was in the process of reproducing the dominant discourse of the course without much critical analysis of its content or procedure. During my time at St. Augustine College,

however, I met several students who outwardly resisted various components of the system, whether it was St. Augustine's politics, religious practices, or the ways that courses were taught. Many of these students were critical thinkers and were intellectually invested in making certain changes in their courses or in the college itself. Before I describe this kind of "knowledgeable resistance," however, my next case study highlights the kind of resistance that proved unproductive within this particular activity system.

Patrick was a fifth-year senior in a philosophy course (taken mostly by sophomores and juniors). Unlike Amy, Patrick was generally distrustful of his professors. His perception of most of his professors was that they wanted to "churn out autotrons" for the corporate world. Most of the students at St. Augustine were white and middle class, and Patrick physically appeared to fit that mold. However, he told me that his father is white and that his mother is Guatemalan and that he's spent much time in South America, both with family and for an exchange program. In his advanced religion classes he'd been reading *Tao The Ching* by Lao Tzu and several of his papers discussed the "tenuousness" of truth. When I asked Patrick for his writing in all his classes, he was quick to point out that he had written lots of poetry I could use as well. In our discussion of his writing, he was proud of the way he could question the truth of the "text." He had an active commitment toward his identity as a resister and questioner, and he distrusted anyone who believed in "absolutes."

The focus of the philosophy course I observed, taught by Dr. Margaret Ferris, was ethics and was different than Dr. Hassan's popular culture course in several ways. First, as an introduction to philosophy, Dr. Ferris spent much of the course lecturing to students about the philosophies of Aristotle, Kant, Locke, and Aquinas; therefore, the class was structured as a more traditional lecture, as opposed to seminar discussion. The purpose of this course was to "examine in detail various philosophers on the question of what constitutes 'good,' virtuous, or moral action in order to understand some fundamental alternatives" and for students to "articulate his or her own moral theory, and to justify that choice." Dr. Ferris's class was writing intensive: she required 5 one-page response papers, 2 five-page formal papers, and 2 essay exams. The final exam included a take-home portion where the students were required to articulate and justify their own moral theory.

When Dr. Ferris and I discussed her course, she explained that she is very committed to students' understanding of philosophy, and she takes her job quite seriously as a philosophy professor who should prepare students to "think about issues of ethics in a critical way, in a way that is logical. I want them to learn the material, but I also want them to be able to articulate what they agree or disagree with." She was very clear about how her course fits into the overall goals of the college. She expected students to conduct the work of learning philosophy, which would in turn conduct the work of the college.

Patrick's participation in Dr. Ferris's class was interesting. He often slept in class, he turned assignments in late, and when he asked questions in class they were obviously not the kinds of questions Dr. Ferris valued for the class discussion. Seemingly, Patrick was not interested in the material or the course. But when I interviewed him, I found out that Patrick's resistance to the

class was purposeful and critically aware. He had very clear ideas about why he thought the class was "bogus." He thought Dr. Ferris's lectures were disorganized and the papers she asked the class to write were not "challenging." Patrick constructed himself as a smart, intellectual thinker who could do the work Dr. Ferris assigned, but he felt that what she asked was a waste of time. When we talked about the material covered in the class, he seemed to me to understand the material and to have some knowledge of it. However, because in class he represented a self that was not engaged in the material, his refusal to turn in assignments and his questions in class seemed "irrelevant" to Dr. Ferris.

Fulfilling the assignment. Most of Dr. Ferris's writing assignments consisted of short papers that asked students to define a particular philosopher's theory, state whether they were persuaded by it, and to provide examples explaining how. In his paper on Thomas Aquinas' "natural law," Patrick's opening line stated, "I don't think this law makes any sense. I believe that the conditioning that we have talked about in class occurs in everyone." The generic expectation of this paper was to define Aquinas' notion of natural law, which Patrick does not do, even though in the assignment sheet and in class Dr. Ferris has explained how she wants the paper structured. Patrick not only does not define natural law, but he rather suggests that the concept is unworthy of addressing at all. In addition, he doesn't refer directly to the text, even though Dr. Ferris required it and has mentioned on his previous assignments that he needs to do so to make a persuasive argument for his points. Given this refusal to engage in the genre as required, and his general lackadaisical approach to the class, Patrick's resistance was unproductive. Perhaps he was critically aware, but any changes could not be achieved because of his self-representation. Patrick's refusal to fulfill the generic expectation of his response paper was mirrored by his refusal to fulfill the generic expectation of the final exam.

Critiquing the questions. In his final exam, Patrick was consistently resistant to engaging in the genre as Dr. Ferris expected and told the class they must complete. She was explicit about the rhetorical aspects of the genre, clearly providing her expectations in her assignment sheets. For the exam, she asked students to determine the "best moral theory" based on the semester's readings: "Describe/explain what you consider to be the truest moral theory and defend/justify why it is the truest or best." She expected students to refer to the readings for the semester and to use them in explaining their theories. Patrick's exam, however, mostly consisted of his feelings that writing poetry was the only moral alternative for society. In the exam he said, "According to me, there is no truest moral theory." In this response, Patrick suggests that the exam question itself is not worth answering. He said, "Everyone is different…It is impossible in that all of the 'theories' will remain just that, simply theories." Patrick saw and constructed himself as a critic of the very idea of discussing all the different theories because imposing any one theory is impossible. While he saw that it was "impossible to dictate what people will see as good or bad," and this might be a valid argument, it was, nonetheless, not the kind of argument Dr. Ferris asked for in the exam. The exam asked, as many exam questions do, students to suspend their belief and address the philosophies for what they were and to argue why one or another might be better, even if they did not necessarily believe them, in order to demonstrate skills in argument and knowledge of the text. Patrick refused to do so because he did not see the point: "I suppose that

moral theories have too many holes in them for my taste." Again, a valid critique, but Dr. Ferris asked students to defend a moral theory despite those holes.

While Patrick's take-home final could be perceived as clever, funny, and a scathing critique of education in general, his self-representation during the semester led Dr. Ferris to perceive his exam as a "blow-off." She assumed he was not prepared to answer the question because there was little evidence in the exam that he understood the theories they'd studied that semester. Dr. Ferris could not evaluate his exam in terms of its innovative critique. His self-representation all semester consisted of resistance to the course and the assignments. Consequently, Dr. Ferris could not read his self-representation in his exam as anything other than further resistance. When Patrick wrote his final, Dr. Ferris could not perceive it but as another example of his resistance to the course which had thus far been unproductive. His critique was dismissed not only because he refused to engage in the generic conventions of the exam, but also because he constructed a self not engaged with the material at hand.

Asking questions. For most of the semester, the only interaction between Dr. Ferris and the students consisted of questions about their papers before they turned them in. While she mostly lectured, she encouraged questions from the class as a way to get her lectures started. She expected questions to be relevant and reflect thoughtful engagement with a text already read. In terms of genre, Dr. Ferris expected that discussion questions asked by students would be directed at her, but that they would be questions that probed the philosophies further or clarified particular aspects of the texts. Whenever students didn't meet that generic expectation, Dr. Ferris usually responded in a way that made it clear that a particular question was inappropriate. For instance, Patrick asked questions that seemingly disrupted discussion. During her lecture on Aquinas, Patrick asked, "But what I want to know is, what does he think about war?" Perhaps in a seminar class discussion, this question might arouse the kind of debate expected in a seminar. But in this class, Dr. Ferris expected that students would ask questions directly referring to the readings, in order to clarify the particular theories. This question was not part of the discussion at hand, and to Dr. Ferris, Patrick's tendency to ask irrelevant questions indicated that he had not read the material.

While Amy was interested in learning appropriate self-representation so that she could engage the genres productively, Patrick already understood that there was a construction of self that occurs in the classroom. However, his form of resistance to that kind of construct was non-productive. He was not able to reconcile his identity as a smart, rebellious student with the discourses of power that asked him to contribute to conducting the work of the classroom. To Patrick, this kind of performance was inauthentic, unethical, and "beneath" him. His resistance was a conscious refusal to perform but was nonetheless unproductive in enacting changes within the system even though he may have had legitimate critiques of the system.

Patrick's success was marked by his non-willingness to represent an "accepted" self, not necessarily by his knowledge of the material. However, the instructor had no way of knowing this: He hadn't shared any of his knowledge with her. His refusal to do so resulted in not succeeding in the class, not making the grades he wants, and not making any significant

contribution to the system. Patrick, however, was consciously aware of his refusal. He understood the idea of representing an accepted self and chose not to do so. His resistance stemmed from his overall perceptions that St. Augustine's agenda was to produce monolithic thinking, an interesting perspective given the wide range of religion courses he took there. In any case, Patrick's identity as one who questions, clashed with his perceived identity of the classroom, so much so that neither he nor the institution gained much in the way of change or learning. Despite Patrick's consciousness of the constructed nature of self-representation, he may be fully aware of the consequences of his resistance to constructing an accepted self. This study suggests that as teachers we might offer options to students like Patrick who resist by introducing them to the multiple issues involved in identity and academic discourse.

Patrick already knows about the performance of self, the constructed nature of discourse. However, for students like Amy, who want to know how to do it, once she knows about self-representation as a performance, then she can decide for herself how she wants to participate and/or resist the system in critically aware ways. Evidence of this knowledge is supported by my next case study, Layla, who was able to perform an accepted self yet was able to knowledgeably resist.

Knowledgeable resistance: Negotiating for change

While Patrick was unable to enact resistance to change the system, another student in Dr. Ferris's class, Layla, resisted in such a way as to negotiate her position within the genres of the class and within the course's pedagogy as well. Layla was a sophomore whose family lived in the same town as the college. Unlike many local students who lived at home, Layla lived in the dorm. "I want to be part of school. Besides," she said, "it's more fun and social here, and believe it or not, I can get more studying done here." Layla was an active member of the college community. She was president of her sorority, was on the dean's list, and participated in several volunteer activities sponsored by the college. Both Layla's parents were college professors. Her brother was a philosophy major, also at St. Augustine, and her family encouraged critical inquiry and debate. Layla actively constructed herself as an active participant; however, she was not interested in being a "good girl" in the classroom. She saw the classroom as an intellectual space, one that she could enter with an understanding of the assigned readings. Her negotiation within the classroom represented what I call "knowledgeable resistance," a productive way of negotiating discourse that provides for both learning and change.

Questioning as a philosopher. In class, Layla typically asked questions that revealed her engagement with the material. For instance, in a discussion about Aristotle's concept of habituation, Layla interrupted Dr. Ferris's lecture and asked, "Isn't habituation just the action though, I mean, it's not just making someone…." Dr. Ferris interrupted her by saying, "Ok, good, and then that's the other thing…" and then continued with a further definition of habituation that accounted for Layla's question. Dr. Ferris was not adverse to this particular type of question/interruption, and she used the question to further clarify the definition she was

already discussing. Layla's question indicated that she had read the material and already, before the question was asked, had a particular understanding of the definition.

In another instance, Dr. Ferris asked Layla directly what she thought about another students' comparison of Aquinas and Aristotle:

> Dr. Ferris: Layla, do you agree with that?
>
> Layla: Well, no. I mean, I agree that a society has to have a standard and that you have to follow the laws or it's not really a society at all. But, when it comes down to comparing Aquinas and Aristotle, it seems really difficult because Aristotle doesn't even believe in a concept of God and his whole philosophy is based on this life and this world. And so you almost you have to either bring Aristotle's philosophy up—well what if there was a god, or bring Aquinas down—you only obey the law. Not because of God but because of the society. So it's kind of like a compromise of things. In the end I said that the individual, if it's some sort of life and death situation you can't expect the individual to forfeit their own natural right which they were given before they were given the laws of society. Simply because it seems that those natural laws came prior to those choosing to live in society.
>
> Dr. Ferris: So Aristotle's more realistic?
>
> Layla: Um, in a certain sense. I mean, you do have to follow the law and you do have to have a standard. But whenever you do make a society you do make those compromises.

In this passage, Layla showed Dr. Ferris that not only has she read both Aristotle and Aquinas, but also that she understood them well enough to compare them and to make a delineated argument which clarifies her conclusions. When Dr. Ferris posed a question to her, Layla did not hesitate in her answers. She was not afraid to tell the class or Dr. Ferris what she disagreed with, indicating a familiarity and comfort with the discourse of the text and the class discussion.

In the genre of class discussion, therefore, Layla was able to construct a self that reflects thoughtful engagement with the texts. Patrick, however, did not ask questions that met generic expectations. When I interviewed Layla, I asked her why she thought she was doing well in Dr. Ferris's class: "What is it that you know about writing a paper or participating in this class that maybe other students don't know?" I asked. Layla replied, "She wants us to think like a philosopher. She wants us to write logical arguments that show that we know what the philosophers are saying." Layla felt she understood what Dr. Ferris expected in their papers, and therefore she represented herself as a philosopher. For instance, in her final exam, Layla said, "Aristotle's theory may seem to require too much knowledge for complete happiness to constantly, if ever, be achieved. Rather, it is not the complete effect of happiness that makes Aristotle's moral theory more convincing; it is the idea that we should know for ourselves what the right action is and not depend on an authority to tell us." As was expected in the class

discussion, Layla presented an intellectual self, one who had clearly read and grappled with the material.

As mentioned earlier, most of Dr. Ferris's class consisted of lecture. Except for a few questions, most of the class was filled with Dr. Ferris's voice. In the middle of the semester, however, Layla began to interject further questions and thoughts as Dr. Ferris lectured. Consider the following:

Dr. Ferris:	Let's say I give you an apple and we say we'll be partners and that we'll split this. Then the next day I see a deer and then we manage to capture this deer and then you are thinking if we split the deer then she eats for a week I eat for a week. But then you think but if I keep the deer all to myself then I can eat for two weeks.
Layla:	Wouldn't Locke say it might better if you cure the deer for two weeks?
Dr. Ferris:	Sure, I've got a great curing technique so we could do that or you could just get rid of me…
Layla:	But wouldn't that be detrimental to society?
Dr. Ferris:	Ok, but it's maximizing your resources…but you're right, you're right. That's very ill-conducive to the society and perhaps society, the population, would just dwindle if there were no cooperation…
Layla:	Right
Dr. Ferris:	Ok, so Locke is going to say that you must maximize your resources….

This type of interchange between student and teacher was atypical for the class during most of the semester. However, Layla's resistance to the dominant discourse, that is, the convention of the lecture, led Dr. Ferris to reconsider the amount of time she lectured versus the amount of time students could be involved in discussing the material. Layla resisted being bound by clarification questions only. She pushed the genre of the lecture class to include the questions that helped her further understand the philosophical theories.

Performing as a philosopher. The questions Layla asked in the genre of class discussion were consistent with the kinds of arguments she made in her formal essays. But while Layla wrote "like a philosopher," she did not imitate Dr. Ferris. She instead integrated her discourses of identity with the discourses of power (of the philosophy classroom) in ways that were original (from Dr. Ferris's perspective) and that demonstrated Layla was engaged with the material and thinking through philosophical issues with serious speculation.

Layla resisted the class lecture genre, but in a way that was useful to the overall course. She resisted the lecture through questions, the kind of questions that Dr. Ferris valued. As a result,

Dr. Ferris changed the format of the class to include more time for the kind of interchange she and Layla had: "I think I might make more time in class for something like that. I can see [Layla] internalizing the material, grappling with it the way I want [students] to do, and I think the debates we have could serve the rest of the students." This kind of change in the classroom, therefore, resulted in a change in the system as the teacher reflected on her pedagogy. This kind of change, then, can help students become more of the critical thinkers that she hopes for. Layla's knowledgeable resistance led to changes in teaching practices, which could lead to changes in the objectives for the class, which could then lead to changes in the curriculum. As a result, Layla's knowledgeable resistance enacted the institution's identity as a school that encourages intellectual thought, not the regurgitation of information.

Layla's resistance is quite different from Patrick's. While Patrick's resistance is seemingly unproductive, at least from Dr. Ferris's point of view, Layla's resistance worked within the system, it was a reciprocal negotiation (Russell, 1997, p. 506). Knowledgeable resistance is in this way is dialogic; Layla was able to interact productively with the multiple voices around her. Her performance of self not only achieved her own goal to be a successful student, but also led Dr. Ferris to re-think certain methods of teaching philosophy. Any of these changes also represent changes within the larger activity system of St. Augustine College. Whenever a teacher, a representative of the institution, changes part of the class, and in turn changes part of the system, then the institutional identity is also shifted. In terms of the self-representation triangle, super-imposed on the activity theory triangle, Layla's knowledgeable resistance occurred at the site where discourses of power are recognized (even if not clearly understood) and discourses of identity are negotiated in relation to those of power. Patrick recognized that discourses of power exist, but his perception of those discourses not only was different from Dr. Ferris's, he also refused to negotiate a self within the discourses of power. Amy, typical of a first-year student, is still in the process of figuring out that discourses of power exist and further how to place her self within those discourses.

Constituting Selves: Conceiving of and Teaching Self-Representation

While the popular culture seminar and the introductory ethics course are very different with different objectives, both professors at St. Augustine had specific goals: to complete not only the work of the courses themselves, but of the college as well. When students represented a self that was appropriate or accepted in a particular classroom environment, then the work of the course could be conducted productively. If a student resisted knowledgeably, then negotiation could take place that would have a productive effect on the class and ultimately the overarching activity system of the college. When students were able to successfully negotiate discourses of identity with discourses of power, and recognize that doing so was a way to negotiate school, then they were able to learn to enact some change.

Amy, Patrick, and Layla's various experiences within the system of St. Augustine College suggest that students' specific interactions with teachers, as representatives of the institutional

values of St. Augustine, presented to students the discoursal values that would be expected of them in their writing. Not only are students' identities intricately woven into their negotiations of academic discourse, but also their responses to specific teachers and discourses, and ultimately institutions, are tangled among the ways they choose to represent their selves.

All of the students in Dr. Hassan's class negotiated the various genres of the course in different ways. Amy's sense of her identity and the ways she wished to be perceived by the rest of the class and by Dr. Hassan were crucial to the way she engaged with the genres of the course. Similarly, whether any of the students in this course had friends in class, felt an affinity toward St. Augustine, or felt loyal to Dr. Hassan, had a profound affect on the way their self-representations varied among the genres they were asked to perform in class. We see a student like Amy attempting to be a good student, but reproducing the dominant discourse of the class. In this way, she is not "performing" self-representation; that is, she's merely presenting a self that she thinks will be successful in this class. Layla, however, is able to perform a self that can then knowledgeably resist the various genres: she can engage them, reproduce them even, and yet also resist them because of her ability to represent an accepted self.

This research represents part of the historical moment at St. Augustine College in which I interacted with several participants of the various activity systems of the college. The moment represents a period of change within the college as it responds to a 21st century workforce and tries to technologically prepare its students. As I read through the history of St. Augustine College, I was surprised and impressed by its social consciousness, especially in the 1950s and 60s. St. Augustine admitted African American students when it was illegal to do so. Students and faculty protested the Vietnam War. Many students spend much time volunteering at half-way houses, nursing homes, and women's shelters through the community service programs at the college. The culture at St. Augustine has changed. Its faculty is more diverse, women are part of the student body, and a diversity initiative has gone into effect to ensure that people of all lifestyles feel welcome at the college while they pursue their educations.

As I have compared students, teachers, administrators, and classes, I have demonstrated the complex ways that an activity system's participants produce the work of that system. In addition, my research shows that participants' involvement in an activity system necessarily includes the introduction of other, equally as complex, activity systems. When these complex systems come into contact with one another, unpredictable changes can occur. Activity systems are diverse: Teachers, students, and administrators have various expectations and assumptions of the school, the community, and the classroom. This indicates, then, the relatively unpredictable nature of activity systems. Thus, I have emphasized the relative (in)stability of activity systems and how this relative stability (similar to the relatively stable nature of genre systems [Bazerman, 1994]) complexly affects the participants of that system and vice versa: They are constantly in flux.

This certain measure of uncertainty in activity systems only means that learning the conventions of multiple discourse communities within an activity system is all the more complex. That is, as people choose to participate in activity systems, they are also expected to know the conventions as they are situated within the culture, the historical moment, and the social values intrinsic to

that system. Added to that are the participants' own cultures, histories, and social values: The two cannot be separated.

Historical Selves/Cultural Identities/Academic Identities: Ethical Self-Representation

One question that Thomas Newkirk asks in his recent book, *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, is "what kind of selves do we invite in our assignments and what kind of selves to we dismiss?" (1999, p. iv). Newkirk asks us to consider that the ways we construct our assignments in fact send messages to students about the kind of selves we may value in their writing. Similarly, Lester Faigley is concerned about the kinds of judgments we can potentially make about students' selves: "Students will be judged by the teachers' unstated assumptions about subjectivity and that every act of writing they perform occurs within complex relations of power" (1992, p. 128). Faigley suggests that hierarchical power relations are always at play when we read students' writing and that writing teachers need to be aware of the assumptions they make. Both Faigley and Newkirk address the ethical dimensions involved in asking students to write autobiographical assignments and the potential for teachers to make judgments about the selves students present when they respond to our assignments.

Newkirk and Faigley's concerns focus on the autobiographical writing that some teachers assign in classes, i.e., literacy narratives, education autobiography, family stories, personal essays, etc. However, both scholars allude to the implications of their concerns for all writing done in composition classrooms, whether autobiographical or not, and the ways our assignments for that writing are constructed. The issue of self-representation, therefore, is important no matter what assignments we give students. Students are still open to our implicit assumptions in terms of the values we place on the self.

The variables that go into analyzing a particular student or teacher within a particular activity system are numerous. They include, among others, family, school, teachers, high school friends, St. Augustine friends, gender, religion, location, commitment and reasons for it, age, residency, and particular classroom. This list does not exhaust the variables that affect a student's interaction with an assignment. As Brandt suggests, students and teachers' personal backgrounds and historical, school contexts are complexly wound into the selves they represent. In this way, their historical, literacy narratives are essential in understanding the ways they come in contact with school and with writing.

My study urges us to reconsider our assumptions about types of students and types of genres as students attempt to produce the genres of the activity system of school. I suggest that students' identities influence their rhetorical choices. When their identities come in contact (through activity systems) with other institutional/administrative/teacherly identities, this also influences their rhetorical choices. In this way, individual identities are an essential part of an activity system, thereby making personal identity essential to institutional identity. There is no institution without the individuals within it. In the same way, there is no academic writing without the individuals who write it. As Herrington and Curtis suggest based on their study of student

writing, "all writing inescapably *does* contain filters of subjectivity" (2000, p.2). Academic discourse is only written by individuals who have complex (and varying) relationships with that discourse.

Herrington and Curtis' longitudinal study reinforces my own results done over a much shorter time period (one semester). However, teachers usually only encounter a student for one semester, having to assess and respond to representation(s) of self within the short 15-week semester. With Herrington and Curtis' work as sound evidence, we can now assume that students' personal selves are intricately involved with their writerly/academic selves. The students I discuss in my study were not dealing with homosexuality, child abuse, or immigrant life (as far as I know). However, their concepts and constructions of self were equally filled with negotiation and struggle, at varying levels. My point is that it is not only the students who are dealing with major life decisions or traumas who are in constant negotiation of school. Our practices and responses to student self-representation should consider all students, not just those who reveal personal facts about themselves. Some of us may not have the time or inclination to be the "trusted faculty member" that Herrington and Curtis describe. This does not mean, however, that we cannot be aware of the self involved in constructing academic writing.

When we as teachers say someone is a "good" writer, what we are really saying is that that person writes in a discourse acceptable to us. When we say someone is a "bad" writer, what we really mean is that that person has not yet learned the discourse conventions acceptable to us at a particular moment, in a particular class, and at a particular institution. As academics, I think we know this implicitly. However, when we say something like "good" or "bad" writer to students, who are new to academia, we can potentially be distressing their identities: We are saying something so personal, rather than rhetorical, that can profoundly affect a writer's desire, will, and work ethic. *We* know our academic choices are intricately bound to our personal experiences. But are we getting that across to our *students*? Herrington and Curtis are also aware of the disparaging ways that some teachers view student writing. They "write against" these attitudes, particularly when examining student writing when written from experience. I would further suggest that even if we agree with Herrington and Curtis and try to read student writing sincerely, whether personal *or* academic, that assumptions about constructions of self are at work. Herrington and Curtis' deep analysis of their students' writing represents the kind of engagement we should always have with our students in terms of examining closely the ways they're engaging discourse. Herrington and Curtis also suggest that we not only make the rules of writing explicit, but that we also explain the why (p. 387). I would add to the notion of making generic conventions explicit (p. 390), that we also let students in on what we know about self-representation. I suggest that we teach self-representation explicitly.

My study suggests that our notions of genre and the self should be shared with students explicitly. By sharing these values and constructions, students' agencies can be enacted in ways they choose. While many writing theorists have recently focused on the ways teachers construct assignments and the ways teachers make certain assumptions, I suggest that students be at the forefront by teaching self-representation explicitly. That is, we may be able to empower students by discussing self-representation explicitly. When writers understand that self- representation is a

construct, a performance, then they can choose whether or not to perform and in what ways. And further, their performances, consistent with postmodern conceptions of self, are ethical and authentic. The goal here is to ask students to try on "voices" as Bakhtin suggests, and to see that this kind of self-representation is not inauthentic or unethical. Patrick saw himself as aware of rhetorical constructs and therefore viewed participating in them as inauthentic. Often, how writers "see" themselves and the way writers represent themselves are not the same.

If we agree with Bakhtin that trying on voices is authentic and a way to learn and construct knowledge, then how do we "teach" this to students? We ask students to complete certain tasks, produce certain kinds of work that are conducive to the overall work of the system. If students are in that system, that is, attending classes for the purposes of obtaining degrees, we can assume that they desire to complete a kind of work—to graduate. Therefore, when asked to represent a certain disciplinary self, we need to express to students the systemic validity in doing so. However, this does not mean that students need to be "autotrons" who spit back what their teachers tell them. I think many teachers desperately hope that students will engage in the material more complexly than that. That is why the notion of rhetorical performance is so important. As Pollock suggests, performing writing is a way to critically engage in the genre and the discourse community driving that genre. Amy, for instance, might have benefited from an explicit discussion of the genre of the critical essay and the disciplinary self expected within it. By explicit I do not mean the explication of textual features; rather, I mean the conscious, reflective discussion of the ways a critical self is composed within certain kinds of genres.

Pedagogical Implications: Teaching Genre and Self-Representation

Pedagogically, then, how do we "teach" genre or self-representation in such a way that students can critically engage in them? What selves do we invite and value in the assignments we give? What are the tangible tools we can give students to negotiate classrooms, and ultimately institutions, rhetorically? How do we convince students that engaging in an issue, despite their disinterest or apathy, is authentic and ethical in terms of their construction of self?

Students are aware of the discourses of power and therefore engaged in complex assessments of an accepted self in the classroom. Not all students "correctly" assess the accepted self. For those students trying to figure out how to successfully negotiate school, the explicit discussion of genre, discourse community, and self-representation become ways of teaching students the implications of self-representation in their writing and classroom discourse. These are the rhetorical tools we can give students to help them successfully negotiate school. In whatever way we conceive of and teach genre, we must also consider the way we are in turn "teaching" self-representation. And as I suggest, addressing the performative and rhetorical nature of self-representation are ways of doing so. If we can address the generic conventions of discourse communities, I would suggest adding self-representation as an item for discussion and exploration.[9]

Defining and Conceiving of Self-Representation in Composition Studies

If we are indeed convinced that self-representation is a teachable issue of genre, then, it can be taught as a rhetorical construct, without making any one person feel as though his or her personal values are being challenged within a certain topic or classroom discipline. When we make our assumptions and expectations known, as much as we ourselves are aware of them, then students can choose to respond on a more equal playing field (well, as much as the teacher/student relationship can be equal). Though Dr. Hassan and Dr. Ferris did not explicitly address self-representation in their classes, their approaches to teaching writing provided students with disciplinary expectations that allowed students to respond in appropriate ways. A more explicit discussion of self-representation, as it applies to and interacts with generic and disciplinary expectation, would help ensure mere imitation does not take place. In addition, explicit discussion of self-representation also encourages "knowledgeable resistance" as a productive interaction can occur within a classroom and contribute to the meaning making we seek from students.

Finally, many composition teachers choose to advocate Susan Jarratt's notion of "productive conflict" (1991, p. 118) by explicitly encouraging students to discuss the kinds of issues that could potentially lead to emotional responses. These issues include multiculturalism, race, gender, class, and more recently, spirituality. Even if these topics are not explicitly addressed in the construction of our courses and assignments, invariably, moments of tension arise in our classrooms because of the different "identities" present in our classrooms, including our own. Our challenge as teachers is to help students represent themselves rhetorically, across genres, by giving them the tools they need to negotiate their classes and their institutions. As responsible readers, then, not only of students' texts but also of students themselves, we need to consider the rhetorical and performative dimensions of genre and self, and be sure to pass on those considerations to our students.

Coda

During the summer after I'd completed my research, Dr. Ferris and I met one last time to discuss particular aspects of my research. At this meeting she gave me her written response to the written portions of my research. We talked about her response and how her perspective as a philosopher influenced her own notion of the self. We discussed the semester as a whole, reflecting on the research process itself, and the many meetings we had where we discussed student writing, her teaching, my teaching, and teaching in general.

Toward the end of our meeting, Dr. Ferris mentioned one of the students who had been interesting to us both, but who had declined being interviewed for my study: "You know Ben? Well, when I read his final exam, I realized that I had been mis-reading him all semester. I mean, all semester, you and I were talking about self-representation and students negotiating school. And all that time I was reading his papers and assuming he just wasn't trying in my class. Then I read his exam. In this assignment, he wrote about his struggles with the texts we were reading. I

mean, I asked the exam question in such a way and he responded in such a way that he could address the texts differently than in the regular papers. I wouldn't have noticed that difference, I don't think, if you and I had not been talking about all this stuff all semester. I'm much more aware now of how students are attempting to construct the selves they think I want."

Dr. Ferris indicates that she looked at the writing in Ben's exam much differently than she would have had we not been discussing issues of self-representation all semester. Our frequent meetings to discuss student writing afforded both Dr. Ferris and me the opportunity to reflect on the ways that she responded to students and their writing, and the ways that talking about it together informed both our assumptions about how students negotiate self(s) at school. Dr. Ferris's reflection on the semester and her teaching suggests that addressing issues of self-representation explicitly can illuminate some of the difficulties students have with the writing we assign them.

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Notes

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[2] Butler explains her theory of performativity through gender. When a subject does not conform to the traditional notion of a gendered construction, then that subject is displaced by society. Butler suggests that all gender is a performance. Using cross-dressing as her example, she says that dressing in drag, while criticized for its degradation of that which it imitates, as a performance actually serves to critique "the expressive model of gender and the notions of a true gender identity" (137). By performing gender, a cross dresser calls to our attention that gender is merely a construction, not biologically inherent. By doing so, a cross dresser critiques culturally accepted codes of gender and resists any notion of a "natural" gender. Butler's performative theories, while providing a social critique about gender, are useful in examining the performance of self-representation in autobiography, particularly as an issue of genre. Butler's performance theory has recently been critiqued because, according to Lynne Huffer, "It refuses to acknowledge the social bond underlying any deployment of language" (27). While I recognize these limitations, I still find Butler's performative theory crucial in analyzing the constructed nature of gender (and genre).

[3] See for instance *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, and Satin and Jerome's introduction in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*.

[4] Other composition theorists such as Conway and Yancey have also explored notion of self-representation. My exploration, however, moves beyond theirs through the notion of performance.

[5] Newkirk actually uses Goffman's term "self-presentation." I prefer the term self-representation because, according to Ivanic, Goffman's notion of self-presentation has been critiqued for its "normative view of the effect of social forces" and for "reducing self-presentation to a set of guiles and deceptions under the control of the individual" (22).

[6] My dissertation project more fully summarizes the data collection and research methodology.

[7] However, St. Augustine College's recent initiative, according to its president, is diversity. In a recent faculty retreat, the faculty and administrators discussed ways to increase diversity on campus and to meet the needs of its changing student population.

[8] I am aware, however, of the relative impossibility of ever gaining a true sense of the college, not only because of the impracticability, but also because of my own position as a researcher and therefore as an outsider to that system.

[9] I must, however, be very clear that I am not advocating teaching formulaic structures of genre (see Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway's *Genre and the New Rhetoric* and *Learning and Teaching Genre*). My suggestion advocates a social and historical awareness of genres and the discourses driving them, and consequently the constructions of self valued within them.