

NOTES

¹ These descriptions come from the 1987-88 catalogues of California State University, Los Angeles; California State University, Northridge; and the University of Southern California.

² In 1984, when Flower and Hayes first published their protocol studies, their first "subject" was an English teacher who was asked to write something for readers of *Seventeen* magazine. Even in Flower's recent protocol analyses — and here I am referring to "The Construction of Purpose in Writing and Reading" (*College English* 50, September 1988) — the protocol subject is an English graduate student who teaches freshman composition and who is asked to write something about "revision." Neither of these protocol subjects is representative of the average freshman writer.

³ In an interesting follow-up study, Chi compared the recall ability of "high-knowledge 10-year-old children who played tournament chess and low-knowledge adults who knew little chess" (Glaser 97). Although adults presumably have more sophisticated mental capabilities, the children in this study displayed far superior ability than the adults — attributable to knowledge structures.

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DEMISTIFYING THE ACADEMY: CAN EXPLORATORY WRITING HELP?

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Much of the commentary on the process of intellectual and social initiation to the academy has remained theoretical (e. g.

Bruffee, Maimon, Bizzell), but several studies on types of writing assignments and students' attitudes towards them (e. g. Atherton-Phillips, Herrington, Soven) suggest that writing assignments play an important role in this aspect of undergraduate education. Assignments give seriousness and structure to a course and for many students define its priorities. The teaching of writing provides "students with guidance for seeing and structuring their experience with a set of tacit rules about distinguishing truth from falsity, reality from illusion" (Berlin 7). If writing is actually as powerful a mode of presentation and learning as various studies indicate, then writing assignments may in fact help us to invent the university for our students in more perspicuous ways.

Of course, Gerald Graff is probably correct when he suggests that a reorganization of departmental structures and radical curriculum modifications are necessary if students are to come to understand an increasingly complex and diverse academic culture. However, the significance of linguistic and rhetorical representations of knowledge on students' conceptions of university culture should not be underestimated. Advocates of the socialization model of literacy ("To be literate is to have a socially governed strategy for the use of language — either oral or written" [Bleich 34]) underscore the importance of language cues in the process of intellectual initiation to the academy. Among the many discussions related to this theme, (e. g. Bizzell, Bruffee, Williams) Bartholomae's significant essay, "Inventing the University" offers a striking argument for the unique power of language. The challenge as Bartholomae sees it is that

students must invent the university language...They need a special vocabulary, an interpretive scheme for working out problems, a special system of presentation. They need to understand commonplaces: culturally or institutionally authorized concepts or statements that carry their own necessary elaborations. (135)

However, Bartholomae and others (e. g. Maimon, Williams) who emphasize the significance of language in shaping students' awareness of the rules of the academic game focus primarily on the models provided by the discourse of textbooks, scholarly literature, or the language of the classroom. Yet, perhaps only the accomplished student can ferret out the thinking and rhetorical conventions of a field implicit in a discipline's public discourse, or in classroom dialogue, and the structure of a lecture; for most students, these conventions need to be made explicit (Bizzell, Bruffee, Soven). Here is where writing assignments can fill an important role.

But consider the way many students find academic fields represented to them in their writing assignments. Several studies indicate that many writing assignments call for either informative or thesis-support papers. Their aim is to present information or prove arguments (Atherton-Phillips, Britton). The thesis-support essay may reign almost as supreme as it did when Kitzhaber (1963) demonstrated that for the two previous decades exposition had dominated the composition class. A similar conclusion was reached in a more recent survey (Burhans). Writing Across the Curriculum, in contrast, has emphasized more personal expression through informal, non-structured writing. These programs recommend expressive forms of writing to reinforce independent learning and to stimulate original thinking (Fulwiler, Knoblauch and Brannon). This kind of writing, a writer-centered rather than a subject-centered discourse, places great value on students' personal views and styles of learning.

However, the emphasis on reporting and proof and the more-subjective emphasis on personal discovery and expression give only a partial view of the intellectual norms of university culture. Neither

of these traditions of thinking or writing should be minimized, since both are integral to the academy, and students need to know them. However, writing programs limited primarily to these kinds of discourse do not make explicit some of the "insider knowledge" many of us are interested in passing on to our students. Many things are simply not addressed. For example, how do we choose questions and arrive at hypotheses (not proofs)? The power of the question and the importance of the questioning attitude basic to academic inquiry has become a common theme in discussion about higher education. The critical thinking movement has focused on developing students' capacity to ask questions; the connection between that capacity and intellectual initiation to a discipline is often cited. Elaine Maimon states "Critical thinking means making choices, asking the right questions....Students learn how anthropologists think by learning the kinds of preliminary questions they ask and the answers they write down" (117).

How do we discuss matters that do not lend themselves to absolute proof? James Kinneavy, for example, believes that "because many moral and political issues are not in the realm of the rigidly scientific they are simply omitted from the curriculum (*Liberal Arts* 14)." He sees the restriction of most writing assignments to the informative or thesis paper as regrettable from this perspective, claiming that we omit traditional concerns of the liberal arts by limiting writing to these forms.

Exploratory discourse, an old but little appreciated genre, may be particularly suited for revealing and enabling the kind of thinking and writing involved in these contexts. Two recent advocates of exploratory writing, William Zeiger and James Kinneavy, remind us that exploration is rarely credited as a serious intellectual activity in the public cultural forum of the university - the classroom. In "The Exploratory Essay: Enfranchising the Spirit of Inquiry in College Composition" Zeiger is at pains to emphasize the importance of exploring problems and issues for their own sake. He contrasts the classical tradition of essayists such as Montaigne with the conventional treatment of the essay in the freshman composition class and laments the omission of the exploratory mode from composition instruction. Zeiger argues for the legitimacy and, indeed, the value of resisting the drive towards solution and closure encouraged by the thesis-support essay:

Inquiry or exploration...aims to discover the fecundity of an idea (like the good post-modernist). It does not pursue a linear sequence, but holds several possibilities in suspension simultaneously...rather than refute counterarguments it cultivates them. (457)

Yet Zeiger seems to construe this sort of writing as finally in the service of enhanced self-expression, whereas our claim for exploratory writing is much broader than that.

James Kinneavy, following Kuhn, has developed a schema of exploratory logic which is important to our argument. "Many scientific papers really are the third stages of exploration," writes Kinneavy (*Theory of Discourse* 184). In his system exploration often, but not always, begins by questioning a "dogma," a generally accepted belief in a field. The second stage of exploration is typically the confrontation of that dogma with various anomalies, cases which do not seem to fit. This terminology, derived from Thomas Kuhn's influential treatment of the history of conceptual change in the sciences, suits Kinneavy's purposes well when he enumerates the third stage. This is the stage of "proof" in which the questioning logic of exploration shifts to the controlled process of deduction. The problem for students, as for laymen outside any field, is that public presentations of knowledge habitually suppress all but this last kind of discourse. Formal presentations of knowledge often preclude by

their very organization any peek behind the logical curtain at how the theory was arrived at and why.

Exploration in its classical form of dialectic is one of the several types of discourse distinguished by Aristotle. Kinneavy's use of exploration follows Aristotle and Cicero in distinguishing dialectic from scientific or demonstrative discourse. Demonstration aims at certitude. By contrast, Aristotle conceived of dialectic as distinguished from demonstration precisely because its aim is not certitude, not yes or no, but what Kinneavy calls probable truth (*Liberal Arts* 171). Dialectical thinking always concludes with qualified assertions rather than binary oppositions; dialectical thinking is relational. It is the truth of something compared with something else. In the modern scientific era the tremendous prestige of the demonstrative ideal has made dialectical discourse appear soft and less legitimate. Everybody may do it in private; scientists themselves do it all the time, but when it comes time to write up the research report, no trace of it may remain.

The organization of exploratory writing need not always follow a dialectical form, partly because explorations are often incomplete, being picked up in the middle of things. The organizational structure can vary, sometimes following a narrative pattern, as in one of Kinneavy's examples (a passage from Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki*) in which Heyerdahl describes how a common belief about the origin of the Polynesians was challenged by new information (*Liberal Arts* 187). Exploratory discourse tolerates, even encourages intuitions and flashbacks (163).

The style of exploratory discourse includes the same objective, denotative language that is found in informative or explaining and proving papers, but exploratory writing often sounds more personal because "the minds are still actively investigating the object." (*Liberal Arts* 200). Language often is tentative: words such as "it seems" and "perhaps" are common, reminding the reader that the author is often making a proposal, not proving a thesis. It would surprise most students to discover that what they might view as informal, "forbidden" language is characteristic of their instructors' scholarly conversation and writing.

EXPLORATORY WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments framed to elicit exploratory thinking and writing can be of several kinds, the nature and complexity of the exploratory assignment to be determined by students' familiarity with the subject matter. The following examples are intended only as categorical models. Students can attempt complete original explorations, perhaps following the Kuhn paradigm of dogma, anomaly, crisis, search for a new model, hypothesis, and testing of the hypothesis. Such assignments may help students to understand how we challenge claims and discover new questions, how we think and talk to one another prior to the stage of proving an idea.

For example, the following statement and questions could become the subject matter of a comprehensive exploration:

A number of people have written about the myth of American invincibility. Explain the meaning of the myth and its supporting arguments. What questions have been raised about American invincibility? What evidence is there to support such questions? Can you suggest at least two concepts that are better suited for describing America's strengths than American invincibility? What evidence or reasons would you suggest to support each one? Which is probably the more accurate?

If the paper were to end here then it would remain in the exploratory mode. However, if students were to then write a paper defending their hypothesis with additional information from their

research, the essay would cross over into the explaining and proving mode.

Kinneavy's students write a research paper in which they explore the various sides of a controversy in their disciplines and write a paper in an exploratory manner in tracing the development of their position on the issues. He says,

The paper begins with the student's accepted dogmas on the subject, buttressed by supportive opinions from readings. Then each student poses anomalies which he or she had about the initial dogma before research, and any questionings which the research has brought to light. If the student has changed his or her mind in the process of exploration, the next section is devoted to crisis — the reasons for the repudiation of the original dogma. If the student has not substantially diverged from the original dogma, then the anomalies section is followed by a response to the objections encountered in the research process. For the student who has gone through the crisis, the next stage of the process is a search for a new model; in this stage the possible alternatives are weighed and from them a tentative position, a workable hypothesis is postulated. The application of this hypothesis to the original problem is tested, and the hypothesis is either accepted or rejected....At the end of the paper the student has arrived at a stand on the issue; either for the original dogma, for a new dogma, or undecided among several alternatives. ("Liberal Arts and Current Moral" 17)

However, exploratory writing assignments need not require comprehensive explorations, such as this one does. As Kinneavy points out, the professional scholar may traverse the entire exploratory process: examining a dogma, discovering anomalies, advancing reasons for repudiating the dogma, posing the new question, searching for a new model, and finally proposing a new theory. Most undergraduates will not have the knowledge (or stamina) to negotiate a comprehensive exploration (*Liberal Arts* 183). Assignments can simulate a stage in the process. For example, each question cluster in the "American Invincibility" assignment cited earlier could become the basis of a short paper, resembling one stage of the exploratory process. Interestingly, the execution of each of these "partial explorations" requires an exploratory structure. For example, to define a concept such as "American Invincibility," students must compare and relate various definitions of the term.

In an intermediate level-course, *The Contemporary Novel*, we constructed assignments that were limited to the explanation of and possibly the challenge to claims which identified ambiguities in a text for which there might be no clear resolution.

One assignment focused on E. M. Forster's *Howards End*:

Forster seems to doubt his prescriptions for the good life: only connect, the importance of the inner life, the revitalizing quality of the country, the moral imperative that we must help the underclass.

Explore the basis for such a claim; the correctness of the claim is also subject to challenge.

Students who simply explained the claim pointed out that many elements in the action of the novel contradict Forster's asides to the reader. Some did an admirable job, using a dialectical mode of organization to show how Forster appears to favor one point of view, then another, on several of these issues. However, some students challenged the claim, pointing out that the theme "only connect" does not seem subject to Forster's ambivalence.

This assignment was also used to highlight the difference between exploratory and demonstrative essays. We discussed how an explaining and proving essay could marshal evidence to prove that "only connect" is the major theme of *Howards End*. In the classroom discussion of how the exploratory essay differs from the demonstrative essay, we also discussed how the exploratory paper could be viewed as representing the scholar's private thinking preliminary to a demonstrative paper as well as an acceptable approach to public literary discussion.

Faculty skeptical about their students' abilities to accomplish original explorations may want to have them trace the exploratory process of others. For example in a course in *The History of Philosophy* this is one assignment:

The rise of philosophy in the world of medieval Islam posed new problems for both Muslims and Jews living in Islamic lands concerning the relationship between religious faith and philosophical reason. The working out of this relationship by Islamic and Jewish Philosophers of the Middle Ages showed both continuities and discontinuities with the way the same problem was resolved in Western Christendom from the time of St. Augustine until the end of the 12th century.

In a short (3-5 page) essay, develop the continuities and discontinuities between faith and reason and the way this theme developed in Islamic and Jewish contexts. Compare and contrast one Christian philosopher (Augustine, Anselm, or Abelard), with one Muslim (Alfarbi, Averroes) or Maimonides as the representative Jewish philosopher.

By showing how these philosophers dealt with the relationship between faith and philosophical reason, students might experience first-hand the intellectual processes brought into play when accepted understandings are threatened by new ideas.

Students can be introduced to exploration in the freshman composition course, an excellent opportunity for clarifying the differences between the exploratory and explaining and proving modes of thinking and writing. If instructors are already assigning exploratory writing, their potential for eliciting exploratory thinking should be made explicit to students who may have been conditioned to write in the demonstrative mode.

We can also introduce our colleagues in other disciplines to exploratory writing, continuing to fill our role in interdisciplinary collaboration, as Richard Larson has described it: "going beyond giving directions about the use of the library or how to polish syntax and into the ways in which an inquiry is conducted in an academic discipline (5)."

As we said earlier, exploratory writing is not a panacea for what's wrong with the university. But many students probably leave us convinced that the purpose of the academy is to prove, to arrive at consensus, to accumulate and transmit agreed upon notions about what constitutes knowledge. Exploratory writing assignments may help reveal equally important agendas of the academy — to challenge theories, to ask questions, to examine disagreements, within and between disciplines. They may help us demonstrate that "one purpose of scholarship is to examine commonplaces as well as to transmit them, to question orthodoxies rather than promulgate them" (Laurence 3). These are time honored traditions, but often hopelessly hidden from students.

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"A LANGUAGE OF ONE'S OWN": A STYLISTIC PEDAGOGY FOR THE DIALOGIC CLASSROOM

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As writing instructors, many of us are familiar with the problem of having to teach in content areas about which we have little knowledge, or perhaps even worse, little interest. No doubt, the restraints imposed by textbook "readers," standard syllabi and course descriptions, as well as WAC-inspired approaches to teaching the research paper, all seriously delimit the range of choices available regarding which topics we explore with our classes. Assuming, then, that most of our graduate and professional training has occurred within the broad confines of the humanities, I suspect that we approach the teaching of, say, Herrick's "Delight in Disorder" with the kind of happy confidence lacking in our pedagogical approaches to cognitive dissonance or transverse waves. Though my characterization may be too general to stand as a truism for a profession as thoroughly "dappled" as our own (Lauer), I am certain that there are those among us for whom the above description is an accurate one.

Now in order to understand this problem, it is necessary to examine the assumptions which inform whatever misgivings composition teachers have about developing a writing pedagogy in, for example, one of the social or natural sciences. Foremost among these is the belief that it is somehow the writing teacher's responsibility to impart knowledge to students about a given topic. In this traditional scheme of things, the writing teacher must possess mastery of the particular content area under discussion, must in fact possess some degree of specialized knowledge which, frankly, many of us do not have. Too often, then, we are likely to find ourselves in the uneasy situation of having to keep "one step ahead" of our students, compelled by a misguided epistemology that says, at the very least, we ought to know what we're talking about.

But, indeed, what we're talking about — or, rather, what we should be talking about — is not simply knowledge, but *ways of knowing*. The distinction is an important one, for if, as we claim, process approaches to the teaching of writing encourage the discovery of knowledge, then the writing classroom must necessarily be a place where *learning how to know* assumes greater importance than *conveying what is known*. Obviously, none of this is meant to disparage the content of existing fields of inquiry, but only to assert that it is neither essential nor especially desirable for writing teachers to possess expertise in a wide range of disciplines, even if such were possible. The traditional model of the classroom teacher who bestows information upon quietly scribbling students is one that is antithetical to the purposes of the writing classroom. Rather, the proper concerns of the writing teacher center upon the relationship between knowledge and language and how best to reveal some part of that relationship to our students.

The pedagogy offered here, then, maintains that the content of any particular knowledge is largely a function of the language in which that content is expressed, and that, further, of the many languages available within a given language, each is representative of an approach to knowledge or "way of knowing." Thus, those students intent on increasing their "word-power" through disciplined vocabulary-building, or those students eagerly perusing a thesaurus in order to find an impressive synonym, are all considerably limited in their understanding of what stylistic choices imply. To be precise, every stylistic choice our students make reflects a consciousness about how something is to be understood, whether that