# Dwelling in Prediscursive Moments: The Role of Interactions Towards a Relational Model of Ethos

by

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the texts that students produce in first-year composition (FYC) settings have served as the predominant sites for faculty to perceive students' writerly ethos. It is primarily in these texts where faculty tend to assess the variety of available credibility cultivation practices that students employ as they attempt to increase their discursive authority. Given the breadth of scholarship in writing studies detailing contemporary students' struggle to engage in the language of the academy and the parallel calls to challenge the kinds of dominant discourses that are privileged in institutions of higher education, in this study, I explore other potential faculty pathways to perceiving ethos. To do so, this dissertation draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of discourse that calls attention to the sociologlical conditions that grant authority to words as well as contemporary feminist rhetorical scholarship that seeks to disrupt classical and contemporary frameworks of ethos through a renewed interest in notions of location, dwelling, and inhabitance. By eliciting six community college faculty perceptions of FYC students, findings from this qualitative study suggest that community college FYC faculty hold tacit perceptions of students that are closely related to past reputation and virtue–two characteristics of ethos. These perceptions reflect what I refer to as students' prediscursive ethos, which is constituted of the student's social position that is predominantly shaped by the audience's prior image of the student. Moreover, reflecting on their perceptions of students, participants often indexed an array of interactions with students, which suggest that student's prediscursive ethos is partly informed and shaped by certain faculty-student interactions that often precede students' textual linguistic

performances. Thus, I contend that such interactions between faculty and students represent alternative pathways for faculty to perceive students' writerly ethos. Ultimately, I offer a relational model of ethos that more accurately describes the contexts within which community college writers create texts; one that accounts for the textual features that appear on paper (discursive ethos), the sociological conditions (prediscursive ethos) under which those textual features are assessed, and perhaps most important, the alternative pathways (interactions) where both ethotic realities may be reimagined.

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# PREFACE

"I wish I was a slave in an age, old trade,
Like riding around railcars and working long days.
Lord have mercy on my rough and rowdy ways.
Lord have mercy on my rough and rowdy ways."

I first came across these Head and the Heart lyrics in 2010, four years before I would begin my doctoral course work. Even then, these lyrics evidenced the subtle but very real intersection between identity and discursive authority: between what I now have come to recognize as a lifelong interest and preoccupation with what it means to speak (write) *and* what it means to be heard. Though the desire to pursue a doctoral degree back then had not yet materialized into tangible form, my longing for working with "railcars" and working "long days" was perhaps the first recognizable stirring that a professional change was to come. And what I know now that I did not know then is that the constellation of doubts, concerns, and fears that stalled, for many years, any kind of professional change from taking shape was very much rooted in how my "rough and rowdy" ways of speaking (writing) and of being were or could be perceived; or, perhaps better put, in my lifelong preoccupation with and struggle to negotiate the inhabited and ascribed personal, scholarly, and professional identities I took up against the tacit expectations of language that existed within the dominant discourses I was seeking to enter. And so, as a result of this struggle, I simply waited. Personally, I waited until I felt that graduate school was for me. As a first-generation college student, earning a 4-year degree had been the penultimate goal and any possibilities beyond that took many years to crystallize. Academically, I waited to inhabit a scholarly identity that convinced me I

was good enough for graduate school. More specifically, the prospect of entering a community where I would be expected to engage in knowledge-making through an expected proficiency with academic discourse had been debilitating for many years. And professionally, I waited until I was ready to, at the very least, shed enough of the identity of a K-12 educator to be able to entertain the possibility that I could one day inhabit the identity that accompanies teaching in the academy.

In some ways, this dissertation is a culmination of the lived and embodied[1] "field research" that my life as a first-generation Mexican immigrant can be framed as. It is rooted in and is a result of a lifetime of experiences with language, and how language is perceived, that over the course of my life I have come to better understand also as encounters with questions of power and identity that surround the use of language. To speak of my life in these methodological terms is to reconceptualize certain life events as vignettes; as events emblematic of my engagement and preoccupation with the kinds of subjects this project attempts to address. It is in constructing and collecting; in piecing together raw lived-experience like I do below, that I have been able, in very small increments, to find the subtle moorings for this project.

"Mijo, no te bamos a dejar ahora. Solamente te bamos a registrar para el siguiente ano."

(Son, we're not gonna leave you today. We're just registering you for next school year.)

[1]Influenced by Selzer and Crowley's *Rhetorical Bodies*, I use the term "embodied" here and throughout this work to refer broadly to the relationship between the written text and the material conditions under which texts are created. More specifically, this dissertation turns its focus to the relationship between rhetors' embodied practices that surround the creation of texts and credibility construction.

*Mi papa's reassuring words and voice echoed in my mind as I sat amongst strangers. Their strange smell. Their strange laugh. Their strange sound. To my seven-year-old mind, this first-grade classroom, full of faces and voices and pictures and colors and smells, introduced me to silence.*

My earliest literacy memory. Not the first of course. But certainly the first I can recall vividly from memory. It was my introduction to silence. A silence distinct from the many different kinds of silences I have since experienced. It is a silence that hurts. A silence that alienates. A silence that is deafening. A silence that gets louder long after one first hears it.[2]

It was in many ways how Richard Rodriguez, in his 1982 memoir, *Hunger of Memory*, discusses his own battle with the English language. However, whereas Rodriguez described the physical sound of English as loud, shrilling, and deafening, those first moments when I was surrounded by English elicited a silenced, muted mind. An insipid intellectual curiosity.

"Oye...no sabes que dise la maestra? Que quiere que haga con esa palabra que escribio en la pizarra?*"* (Hey, do you know what the teacher is saying? What does she want me to do with that word she wrote on the board?)

*Desperation. What did she want? Why had she written that word on the board?*

No lo puedo hacer. (I can't do this, I thought.)

*Then...as if God-sent, a friend. An ally. Albeit still a stranger.*

"Dile esto. Escribe esto" (Tell her this. Write this down.)

*My newly found friend whispers ever so silently into my ear.*

---

[2]Cheryl Glenn's *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* was instrumental in helping me articulate not only the rhetorical nature of silence, but its visceral effect on me. More to the point, Glenn's text helped align the silence I reference here within the power dynamics often residing in larger institutional histories and patterns.

*"R"*..................*"A"*..................*"P"*...................*"E"*

I was excited. I had an answer! Though every other student had at least twenty times more words than what I managed to write on my lined paper, I could at the very least...participate. I could break that godforsaken silence. And so I did. First hand to be raised. First one to be called. First one to answer. "Rape!" I proudly spoke the only English words I had ever spoken publicly.

First one to be punished. No more than three hours into my American literacy journey, I was certain of two things. One...silence hurts. Two...breaking the silence hurt even more…

If these and the countless other life events are anchoring sites for the exigence of this work, then my twenty-year teaching career has been the site wherein I have engaged in much of this work. It was in the K-12 classrooms where my first attempts at making sense of the intersection between identity, language, power, and perception first took place. It was here where I first tackled questions of credibility within oral/written discourse--questions first relevant to me, but eventually wholly relevant within the context of my classroom. It was with middle and high school students that I first intuited an emerging dissonance between the promises of contemporary writing pedagogies and the complexity of what it meant to help students negotiate and leverage their home discourses as they engaged with conventions of ones perceived to be more privileged. Though I encountered some success, I also encountered an overabundance of students who, long after leaving my classroom, continued to struggle to evoke a positive

perception of their writerly selves through the countless linguistic performances[3] they engaged in as they moved from class to class. And ultimately, it was coming to terms with this stark reality where my growing disillusionment with writing pedagogies, whose predominant pathway to perceive and assess students' performance resided on the page, first began to take shape. I suspected then, something that this project has helped to more concretely name and understand, the need to explore both the alternative pathways for perceiving the writerly credibility and subsequently, the alternative means and sites that might be available to students whereby they might increase their chances of evoking a positive opinion of their writerly identities. To a large degree then, the classroom has occupied two symbolic spaces for me. One, it has always been a space where the material conditions of language, perception, and identity, which my students must negotiate, have intersected; a space where writers had had to account for ascribed labels of deficiency (i.e., "at risk," "first-generation college student," immigrant," "poor") that too often delegitimize their use of language. And two, the classroom, which I have occupied both as a student and an educator, has been the space where I have first employed credibility construction strategies in the hopes of accounting for, or maybe more appropriately, compensating for the potential manner in which my ways of being and ways of speaking/writing might be perceived.

[3] Though I understand that *linguistic performance/linguistic exchange* may connote both oral and textual practices, I use these terms here and throughout this project to specifically index the textual, rhetorical moves FYC writers employ in the essays they are assigned.

But if the classroom made these conditions visible, it was within the confines of graduate school that made them available for deeper study and exploration. It was in graduate school where I was taught to challenge--speak against the grain--of the types of dominant discourses with which my students struggled to engage. Through exposure to and engagement with an array of scholarship, I became aware of the need to first and foremost push against ways of thinking about language and writing that privilege certain kinds of discursive conventions and written linguistic performances over others. And in the midst of my own talking back, in the tradition that bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldua, and other feminist rhetorical scholars practiced and theorized, I discovered a long and rich scholarly tradition rife with theories and frameworks attentive to issues of language, identity, power, and perception not too dissimilar from those with which I had been preoccupied.

In many ways then, this dissertation project is an organic coming together of my personal, professional, and academic experiences surrounding notions of language and identity. It is rooted in my own trepidations with not being heard as much as being heard. It is also rooted in my own success and failures as a writing educator. And ultimately, it is a culmination of countless other language scholars seeking to articulate ways of using words while accounting for the myriad identities they may inhabit or are ascribed and the backdrop of power wherein such linguistic choices are carefully considered and performed.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

*"I want to suggest the potential of ethos to open up more spaces in which to study writers' subject positions or identity formations, especially to examine how writers establish authority and enact responsibility from positions not traditionally considered authoritative" (Reynolds, 326).*

*"Both the assimilation and resistance models of authority have certain limitations. Among these is a tendency to objectify authority, to cast it as something fixed or autonomous that writers or writing can possess." (Mortensen and Kirsch, 557).*

These statements and others like them--having percolated through my memory, experience, teaching and scholarship over the years--converge for me today into a question about the relation between writing, identity, and discursive authority. More specifically, the question concerns the kinds of theories and pedagogies that attempt to explain and describe the available means and sites through and in which community college writers bridge the gap between their ascribed and inhabited identities and the different kinds of discursive authorities they might achieve or try to achieve in and through writing. Like many in our field wanting to narrow this gap, my scholarship and pedagogy are informed by our field's egalitarian propensities, which continually ask us to consider how best to help writers question, challenge, and disrupt the validity, power, pervasiveness, and oppressive nature of dominant discourses while accounting for the complex and oftentimes vulnerable positionalities of two-year college writers. And similarly, as a composition scholar engaged in what Asao Inoue's 2019 CCCCs call referred to as "Languaging—our laboring with and around language," much of this labor involves theorizing not only the available means--processes, practices, habits, as well as

the sites--that exist for two-year college writers to negotiate their discursive authorities within academic contexts, but also, the alternative pathways that might exist for perceiving and assessing such means.

Most recently, the process(es) of narrowing the gap between a writer's identity and discursive authority has received careful and productive consideration from feminist scholars interested in space, place, and locality (Christoph, 2002, Hyde, 2004, Bizzell, 2006, Pittman, 2006, Reynolds, 2007, Rowe, 2009, Buchanan and Ryan, 2010, Applegarth, 2011, Griffin, 2012, Applegarth et al., 2016). This work has been instrumental in helping our field continue to move beyond modernist notions of objectivity and neutral knowledge-production. Through these scholars' careful and nuanced exploration regarding the politics of writing, power, and knowledge, the situated nature of knowledge and its relationship to an author's identity have been made explicit. Some feminist scholars for example, have theorized and described processes that call for writers to be explicit about their identities, positionalities, or locations--to establish their discursive authority by a credibility-building process of claiming and locating their marginality on the text[4], through an explicit acknowledgment of their differences and positionalities (e.g., Rich, 1984, Collins, 1991, hooks, 1989, Pittman, 2006). Others (e.g., LeFervre, 1986, Ronald, 1990) also locate this discursive process in written text, not necessarily by speaking from the margins, but by engaging in textual practices that trace the "mediation or negotiation that goes on in the spaces between writers and their

[4]Though "text" in classical rhetorical scholarship is generally understood to be oral (speeches), my usage of text here refers to both oral and written artifacts.

locations" (Reynolds 333). In this view, discursive authority is negotiated when writers engage in a credibility-building process of articulating their ways of knowing; when they are radically transparent in their texts about the intersections of various communities that have and continue to shape their epistemologies. And still other feminist scholarship on identity and discursive authority (e.g., hooks, 1989, Probyn, 1996, Rowe, 2005, ) has turned to notions of relation within the writers' dwelling places. Here, the emphasis is on a process of uncovering writers' multiple modes of belonging; to uncover, discover, and articulate in their texts their own oppressions and privileges--and ultimately move away from colonizing mentalities and "continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed…" (Rowe, 25). And finally, most recently, Ryan et al.'s germinal text, *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, seeks to disrupt traditional definitions of ethos--the credibility-building process that a rhetor engages before an audience--through what the authors refer to as *feminist ecological ethe*, a construct that coalesces ecological studies and etymological scholarship on ethos within feminist scholarship. In this text, the authors provide us with an array of rhetorical textual maneuvers to describe credibility-building practices that regard "place, embodied locatedness, and discursive independence" (Code, 20) as integral factors that make discursive authority possible.

While I acknowledge the affordances created by turning to notions of locality, location, geography, and ecology as productive frameworks to describe the credibility-construction processes of how rhetors can narrow the aforementioned gap, my question arises from a less promising tendency that they share: a continued reliance on the *text* as

the primary site where credibility cultivation is cultivated and perceived. More specifically, while they are productive in creating new ways to conceive of the spatial and located nature of such practices within a text, these scholars leave unexplored other pathways to perceiving ethos--namely, they fail to account for the potential of exploring ethos as a relational process that constitutes the ways that audiences perceive both the discursive practices that appear on a page and the prediscursive activities that occur long before a text is written. They leave largely unexamined what can be gained when we call attention to the lived interactions between audiences and writers that surround the construction of a text and frame these interactions as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos.

This study then seeks to make two closely aligned contributions: one theoretical, to re-imagine and make visible other pathways for perceiving ethos; and one pedagogical, to offer writing faculty a more nuanced perspective regarding the unique role that their perceptions of students related to certain reputational markers and dispositions may shape their perceptions of students' writerly ethos. Given the degrees to which contemporary community college writers differ from classical rhetors with respect to education, status, and writing ability, this dissertation attempts to better account for the challenges that might arise from entering discursive moments from such vastly different positionalities. To achieve this, what follows is a description of a qualitative study that took place during the fall 2020 semester at a community college in Arizona that sought to broadly examine faculty perceptions of community college FYC students entering their classrooms as well

as, more specifically, the extent to which these perceptions are informed by the faculty-student interactions that surround the creation of written texts.

In chapter 2 of this manuscript, I first review and examine trajectories of rhetorical scholarship on ethos. Classical and contemporary scholarship on ethos provides an appropriate entry point for this project given its long and established exploration of credibility-building processes before an audience. The purpose here is to trace both the subtle and more explicit limitations present in classical scholarship on ethos, especially when these traditions are applied to contemporary FYC students and settings. Next, I map out etymological discussions in feminist scholarship. Here, my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which notions of place, location, and dwelling can help open new sites that might allow us to better capture and examine the subtle prediscursive activities that exist outside of the rhetorical argument--activities that this project suggests, might help us re-imagine ways to perceive credibility construction. I conclude the literature review by introducing and framing faculty-student interactions as one possible example of the aforementioned activities. My purpose here is to provide a rationale for framing this phenomenon (faculty-student interactions) as the focus of inquiry of this study.

In chapter 3, I explain in detail the methodology for this qualitative research study that utilized ethnographic methods to examine faculty participants' perceptions of students and the extent to which their interactions with students shaped those perceptions. I describe the data analysis process used to analyze and make sense of six faculty participant interviews.

In chapter 4, I report on two findings related to the primary research question that informed this study and its design concerning faculty perceptions of FYC community college students. First, I outline and describe four general themes around which faculty perceptions focused–students' past education, students' mental health, students' socio-economic status, and students' dispositions. After briefly describing these themes, I explain their relation to two specific ethos-related attributes–past reputation and virtue. I suggest that when we analyze faculty perceptions of students through notions of ethos as conceptualized through the classical rhetorical tradition (synthesized in part 1 of chapter 3), we get a much clearer picture of the kinds of markers of identity that students inhabit and/or that faculty ascribe to students. I end the chapter by claiming that as we make these identity markers more clear, we are potentially also in a better position to understand how faculty perceive students' writerly selves.

In chapter 5, I report on findings related to a secondary research question that emerged out of the aforementioned focus on faculty perceptions. More specifically, as faculty participants reflected on their perceptions of students, their reflections indexed interesting ways in which their interactions with students seem to shape and inform those perceptions. Drawing specifically from notions of location and dwelling that I describe in part 2 of the literature review, I begin chapter 5 by describing a general landscape of faculty-student interactions revealed in this study and articulate the most prevalent interactions evidenced through interview data by categorizing the domains in which those interactions tend to occur. Subsequently, after briefly describing the kinds of activities and conversations that tend to occur in each domain of interactions, I explain what a

description of these activities and conversations reveals about the overall nature of interactions between faculty and students. More specifically, I argue in this chapter that the liminality of interactions may be one underlying factor that explains their influence on the perception formation process that faculty undergo–a process of influencing, shaping, and revising how faculty perceive students' writerly identities.

In chapter 6, I discuss a framework of ethos informed by what participants had to say about their perceptions of students (in chapter 4) and the emerging role that interactions play in shaping those perceptions (in chapter 5). More specifically, I discuss a relational conception of ethos that I argue accounts for its discursive *and* prediscursive nature. Situating this proposed model within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of discourse and Ruth Amossy's notion of prior ethos, I discuss how this model extends currents feminist notions of location and relation with respect to ethos. In particular, I argue that by broadening our conception of location to account for the interactions that faculty and students engage in outside of the written page, we gain a much better understanding of the sociological conditions under which modern community college rhetors enter FYC classrooms and the factors that may influence the extent to which those conditions shape perceptions of students' writerly identities. Finally in chapter 7, I end with a discussion of this study's limitations and potential implications on writing studies scholarship and pedagogy.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Given this study's focus on exploring alternative means of perceiving ethos that do not rely on a writer's linguistic performance, a chief aim of the literature review below is to demonstrate how a careful consideration of past and current scholarship on ethos can uncover alternative frameworks that elucidate other potential means for perceiving, assessing, or evaluating students' attempts to increase their discursive authority through the texts they write. What follows then is not necessarily an exhaustive review of the literature on ethos, but rather, a discussion of specific classical and contemporary scholarship that explores and illuminates the most relevant questions and issues surrounding ethos that I believe are integral for articulating a relationship between ethos and alternative for perceiving it.

## Part I: Positioning Ethos within the Classical Rhetorical Tradition

Classical rhetorical notions of ethos provide an appropriate starting point given its historical and continued prevalence in FYC as well as its well-documented framework of ethos. Overall, the review of classical notions of ethos resulted in the emergence of four key themes that I discuss below. These themes, I contend, when discussed in relation to each other, offer us a glimpse into the ways in which interactions and credibility cultivation may be put in productive conversation and the possible theoretical and pedagogical affordances that such dialogue might provide. Running through these themes is an attention to the notion of construction. At times, the question of a constructed ethos brings into focus its constitutive parts. In other instances, what is under examination is

the enduring and/or transitory nature of the ethos that is constructed. Still in other cases, the very nature of a constructed ethos is debated, bringing into conversation questions about authenticity. And finally, the notion of construction often elicits questions concerning the site of where a rhetor constructs their ethos and where such ethos is perceived by audiences. The four themes are:

1. Constitution of ethos
2. Stable and dynamic notions of self
3. Site of ethos performance
4. Constructed/Authentic nature of ethos

*Constitution of Ethos*

Traditional and contemporary discussions of ethos privilege a rhetor's character and reputation as factors that are integral in our persuasive abilities. In regards to character, Aristotle defines ethos as follows in Book 1 of *On Rhetoric*:

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.

For Aristotle, a rhetor's personal character is clearly a fundamental component of credibility construction, a point also echoed and much further developed not only in the rest of *On Rhetoric*, but also in other works such as *Nicomachean Ethics*[5] and *Eudemian*

[5] In Books II - VII of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses at great length the nature of virtue, the types of virtue, and the relationship between virtue and moral character.

*Ethics*[6]. In book 2 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle structures his theory of credibility construction by aligning a rhetor's personal character to a tripartite division of ethos: practical wisdom (phronesis), virtue (arete), and goodwill (eunoia). For Aristotle, practical wisdom referred to a rhetor's ability to make sound or common-sense judgments in an array of contexts. As Garsten (2006) notes, Aristotle's phronesis could be aligned to one's "mental activity of responding to particular situations in a way that draws upon our sensations, beliefs, and emotions without being dictated by them in any way reducible to a simple rule" (7-8). When referencing virtue, Aristotle contends that it is a state of character related with choice. More specifically, he aligns moral virtues with "motivations and actions that lie on a continuum running from excess to deficiency, either end being a vice" (Smith 7). Among the virtues Aristotle lists in *Ethics* are courage, liberality, prudence, wisdom, and gentleness. With respect to goodwill, perhaps the most accurate connotation can be found in Aristotle's notion of "friendliness". Here, he specifically refers to goodwill as a rhetor's disposition to want the best for others. In other words, a speaker or writer gains credibility when she can convince the audience that she has their best interests in mind. Ultimately for Aristotle, these traits, when appropriately fashioned by a rhetor within a text[7], constitute an artistic accomplishment and result in the active construction of ethos.

---

[6]In *Eudemian Ethics*, one of Aristotle's chief interests is the acquisition of virtue--specifically arguing that rhetors develop virtues through a process of habitation. In Book III, Aristotle introduces his notion of virtue as a *mean* between deficiency and excess of a particular virtue.

[7]Though "text" in classical rhetorical scholarship is generally understood to be oral (speeches), my usage of text here refers to both oral and written artifacts.

Beyond a rhetor's personal character's influence on credibility construction, Aristotle also alludes to the potential role that reputation might play as a potent component of ethos. In book 1 chapter 5 of the *Rhetoric*, he discusses an array of enduring[8] credibility markers, or attributes, that audiences tend to regard favorably, including "good birth," "wealth," "health," beauty," "good friends," and the like. While Aristotle understates reputation given his desire to focus on what can be created in the text, it was clear that those normative identity markers that were ascribed to classical rhetors served as a critical foundation to their ability to be heard in the polis, courts, and ceremonial venues. In fact, many of Aristotle's contemporaries, who aspired to engage in public discourse, were usually ascribed or inhabited markers of credibility such as: 'intelligent,' 'educated,' 'raised in a good family,' and possessed 'good social standing.'

A similar reliance on character and reputation can be seen in Isocrates' view of ethos--a view that he expands in *Antidosis*. While in Aristotle we see a hesitancy to place reputation and rhetorical argument as equal parts of character, Isocrates is more accepting of their possible relationship. In this work, Isocrates states,

> The man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character [ethos]; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when

[8]I use the term "enduring" to refer to identity traits that are often difficult for contemporary writers to account for and/or negotiate. The difficulty may arise from the fact that some traits, such as good family standing, are out of a rhetor's control as they exist apriori to the creation of a text. In other cases, the difficulty resides in the normative nature of a particular trait. To be educated, for example, is historically laden with positive connotations of intelligence and hard work. And finally, "enduring" can also index an identity marker's proclivity to appear fixed.

spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is more weight than that which is furnished by words" (Section 15, 278).

For Isocrates, ethos becomes both a legitimating source and product of a rhetorical argument. A rhetor's character, constituted by their good repute and rhetorical competence, becomes an integral component in matters and concepts where truth can only be grasped at, "since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say" (271). Running through *Andtidosis* is Isocrates' belief that the art of discourse must include an equal emphasis in both the technical art of making/writing speeches and character development as manifested through one's reputation. In contrast to Aristotle who seemed to regard practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill as the integral constituents of ethos (moral character) and appeared to unwillingly acknowledged the role that reputation might play in its development, Isocrates regarded the kind of reputation that a rhetor might develop through life just as important as his rhetorical competence. And of course, it is this very emphasis on a rhetor's character, developed through living well, that is echoed in Quintilian's edict that an orator be a good man speaking well.

*Stable and dynamic notions of self*

Given the aforementioned discussion on the relationship between *ethos* and notions of identity related to reputation, a second relevant theme running through the classical scholarship on ethos are questions surrounding the ontology of the self. Framing and bounding these discussions are two competing conceptions of the self: an ontology of

self that perceives the subject as a stable, autonomous, and self-reliant entity; and another that imagines a self that is fragmented, socially constructed, and in constant stasis.

In many ways, these opposing perceptions of the self can be traced back to classical rhetorical conceptions that, as Marshall Alcorn suggests, perceived the subject as being capable of occupying and realizing the roles they habitually played. As a result of this understanding of the self, *ethos* becomes a phenomenon a rhetor can manipulate, control, and ultimately evoke through rhetorical action. In Aristotle, this conception of the self is clearly evident in his study of the strategies employed by effective rhetors and, more importantly, in his efforts to systematize these strategies. Thus, when Aristotle states that, "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible" (1356a4-6), emphasis here must be placed on, "when the speech is so spoken," as here resides the existential assumption of an autonomous, authorial self who possesses an agency, or self-reliance, to express or reveal itself through language. Similarly, when Quintilian calls for a rhetor to be a good man or a good woman, the underlying implication here is that of a self that is a real being in the world who might need language to reveal itself but whose existence precedes discourse.

On the other hand, the conception of the self as an unstable and socially constructed being results in a much different manifestation of ethos. If selves are fragmented and socially constructed instead of creative agents, then they are little more than byproducts of rhetorical action. Here, we are reminded of Homer's *skeptron*, or scepter, that Achilles takes up, after he is calmed by the goddess, Athena, before pronouncing a curse upon Agamemnon in Book 1 of *The Iliad*.

> But the son of Peleus again addressed with violent words the son of Atreus…"Heavy with wine, with the face of a dog but the heart of a deer, never have you had courage to arm for battle along with your people...else, son of Atreus, this would be your last piece of insolence. But I will speak out to you, and will swear thereto a mighty oath: by this staff that shall never more put forth leaves or shoots since first it left its stump among the mountain, nor shall it again grow green, for...the sons of the Achaeans carry it in their hands when they act as judges...this shall be for you a mighty oath. Surely someday a longing for Achilles will come upon the sons of the Achaeans one and all, and on that day you will not be able to help them...when many shall fall dying before man-slaying Hector. But you will gnaw the heart within you, in anger that you did no honour to the best of the Achaeans" (1.222.244).

In this excerpt, Achilles's words are made significant by the power, not in the words he speaks, but by the authority that the staff grants them. The scepter that is passed on reflects the social preconditions that grant the self any kind of authority to speak. Under this framework, rhetors have very little control over constructing or evoking *ethos*. Here, the self does not construct language but instead, "is constructed by language and other modes of cultural-symbolic communication/participation" (Baumlin and Meyer, 2018). In this model, the self arises or comes into being within "the context of relationships with others during which self-representation behavior is performed" (Tedeschi 1986). To the extent that this performance is undertaken by an individual rhetor does not make the self a point of origin. Ultimately from this perspective, "Selves are not creative agents

working within the inner core of the rhetorical process; instead, selves are the effects of rhetoric, a sort of epiphenomena constituted by an interplay of social, political, and linguistic forces. There is no inner entity, the self, that chooses its character. Instead, the self reflects the particular character of larger social forces that determine its nature and movement" (Alcorn, 5).

These competing theories of the self-result in varying conceptions of credibility construction. If the self is assumed to be autonomous and self-reliant, then conceptions of ethos will tend to focus on exploring the tangible strategies available to rhetors to shape how their ethos is constructed. Whether these strategies are employed or perceived within or outside of the text (a point I discuss in the next section), the key point here is that ethos construction is predominantly a process over which a rhetor has agency. On the other hand, if we assume that authorial subjects are predominantly socially constructed entities, then ethos construction is not dependent so much on what a rhetor writes or does as Aristotle might have us believe. Instead, exploring the process of ethos construction must also take into account the social forces and conditions that precede the subject and that determine its nature and development.

*Site of ethos performance*

Beyond the constitution of ethos and the nature of the authorial subject, another relevant theme to this present study has to do with the sites, or pathways, for perceiving ethos. By pathway here I'm referring to the material or conceptual space where ethos cultivation is primarily perceived by audiences. Is the text, for instance, the primary site where ethos cultivation can be witnessed? Or, do other pathways exist that are conducive

to evaluating or assessing ethos cultivation? For Aristotle, the *speech act* "is among other things a dramatization of the character of the speaker, and the wise speaker will construct his speech with an eye toward the sort of character it portrays" (Halloran 60). In other words, the prevailing sentiment underlying Aristotelian ethos is that the latter could be primarily shaped by, displayed, and perceived in the *speech act* itself—and eventually, of course, the written word. This sentiment, I argue, widely informs and is reflective of how ethos is perceived in FYC classrooms. In these contemporary contexts, FYC faculty perceive and ultimately assess the effectiveness of a student's work primarily by the language-related constructions, or performances, that he/she performs within the written text. Thus, as Craig Smith points out, within an Aristotelian tradition, "speakers [writers] are assessed on the basis of how the speech [text] is constructed, well organized versus poorly organized" (12).

On the other hand, Isocrates believed that ethos was best achieved and could be best perceived through one's life and lived experiences. Isocrates explicitly juxtaposes "the argument that is made by one's life" with "that which is furnished by words" (278). In fact, Isocrates sought to cultivate a rhetor's character through rhetorical *paideia* (education), by selecting "the most illustrious and most edifying" examples of human actions. By "habituating himself to contemplate" such examples, according to Isocrates, the rhetor will "feel their influence...in all the actions of his life," and ultimately display these in all communicative and rhetorical transactions. (277-278) Thus, for Isocrates, it is a rhetor's specific character, which he believed could be heavily influenced and developed by the educational process as well as "his stellar reputation, that anchors the

persuasive capacity of rhetoric" (Hyde, xv). Thus, while Aristotle focuses our attention to ethos as an artistic accomplishment developed, displayed, and perceived within the text, Isocrates directs our attention for understanding ethos as primarily perceived and developed through a person's well-lived existence.

The different emphasis on the sites for perceiving credibility construction notwithstanding, it must be noted that discussions of where ethos was performed still focused "on the speaker's securing the trust and respect of an audience by representing him- or herself *in the speech* as knowledgeable, intelligent, competent, and concerned for the welfare of the audience" (Cherry 398). Thus, these early orators, while certainly understanding the social, political, cultural, and historical capital which their dominant status afforded them, still relied heavily on the linguistic exchange as a means of persuasion in public discourse.

*Constructed/authentic nature of ethos*

Finally, a fourth theme relevant to this discussion concerns the question of whether *ethos* reflects a constructed or genuine representation of the self. On the one hand, an Aristotelian perspective seems to posit the possibility of an *ethos* founded on a rhetor's socially situated representation. For Aristotle, cultivating one's *ethos* results in locally and contextually situated representations constructed for equally situated audiences and rhetorical moments. Within this premise, rhetors construct characters, or personas, that meet the social, political, and cultural expectations of their audience. In other words, rhetors invoke an *ethos* that fits the situation.

In contrast to Aristotle, Isocrates adheres to a more Platonic view of *ethos* that invokes at all times a universal and authentic character. Isocrates focuses on a man's genuine good character instead of a merely constructed one to give a particular desired impression. Rather than relying on a created ethos suited for a given discourse, Isocrates believed that a man's actual character was a precursor for a rhetor to be persuasive (even if that genuine character is tailored to a particular situation). Once again, in *Antidosis*, Isocrates for example states that the "argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words..." (278). Throughout *Antidosis*, Isocrates carefully crafts an ethos by describing his character throughout the course of his life: one that is characterized by honesty, modesty, and consistency. By highlighting in *Antidsosis* these virtuous traits, Isocrates is attempting to demonstrate that character must reflect a genuine representation of a rhetor's life--not simply one that is crafted for the occasion. Thus, for Isocrates, the authenticity of character resembled an ontological reality in the Platonic sense.

Synthesizing both Aristotle and Isocrates is Cicero. In *De Oratore*, Cicero's Antonius explains that "A potent factor in success, is for the characters, principles, conduct, and course of life, both of those who are to plead cases and of their clients, to be approved, and conversely those of their opponents condemned" (Cicero, 328). Like Isocrates, Cicero certainly seems to be attributing great importance to a rhetor's genuine character in establishing ethos. However, Cicero resembles Aristotle in that he also includes in *De Oratore* the rhetorical means that may aid in persuasion, such as "a mild tone, a countenance expressive of modesty, gentle language, and the faculty of seeming

to be dealing reluctantly and under compulsion with something you are really anxious to prove" (329). In these passages, it is clear that for Cicero, a person's genuine character and reputation influenced their ethos. However, it is also evident that Cicero understood the importance of appearances and perception; the ability a rhetor possessed in creating for the occasion a favorable impression. As Connolly notes, Roman rhetoricians such as Cicero constructed their ethos not simply by relying on the orator's past moral actions and conduct, but on a broader scale, by appealing to the audience's past "through the use of models (*exempla*), in the effort to anchor itself in collective memory and renew that memory's force" (26). Thus, Cicero seems to strike a balance between a rhetor's need to possess good character and their need to create for the rhetorical moment a constructed character that might aid in winning over an audience.

This conflict of relying on either a genuine character or a constructed one seems certainly to come to a head in Quintilian. In Book 12 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian frames the upcoming discussion and defense of "a good man skilled in speaking" (413) as one of utmost importance. "I should give my vote for virtuous living in preference to even supreme excellence of speaking. But in my opinion, the two are inseparable. I hold that no one could be a true orator unless he is also a good man" (Quintilian 41). Throughout this final book of his treatise then, according to Richard Lanham, Quintilian carefully and systematically defends the necessity of moral character by reflecting

> that if oratory serves only to empower evil then what has he spent his life doing? And not only that, what has nature done to us, if she allows something like that? Turned language, man's best friend, into a potential enemy? To confront this

> question honestly would imperil his entire endeavour and so, with that genial resolution which illustrates his sweet nature throughout the *Institutio*, he assumes the answer he wants and then goes on to bolster it with inventively adapted Platonism. (155)

In his treatise on creating the ideal orator (*Institutio Oratoria*), though one might surmise that he ultimately privileges an orator's moral character as the medium through which ethos is constructed, like Cicero, Quintilian also understands the importance of the discursive moment (Harshbarger, 38). In Book X, Quintilian writes "But the crown of all our study and the highest reward of our long labours is the power of improvisation. The man who fails to acquire this had better, in my opinion, abandon the task of advocacy..." (Quintilian 10.7.1). According to Harshbarger, Quintilian apparently elevates a rhetor's ability to improvise, primarily through speech/words, as absolutely necessary to fulfill a Roman's public duty.

> For there are countless occasions when the sudden necessity may be imposed upon him of speaking without preparation before the magistrates or in a trial which comes on unexpectedly. And if any such sudden emergency befalls, I will not say any innocent citizen, but some one of the orator's friends or connexions, is he to stand tongue-tied and, in answer to those who seek salvation in his eloquence and are doomed, unless they secure assistance, to ask for delay of proceedings and time for silent and secluded study, till such moment as he can piece together the words that fail him, commit them to memory and prepare his voice and lungs for the effort? (Quintilian 10.7.2)

Here, Quintilian's trust in the power to do things with words is evidenced as he reminds his audience of the importance of the linguistic performance--whether that performance be improvised or performed after "silent and secluded study." Although it is certainly evident that classical rhetorical thinkers may have perceived ethos somewhat differently, it is clear that this last question of genuine versus constructed character was a constant point of tension that each thinker attempted to resolve differently in their works.

As I reflect broadly on how ethos in community college FYC classrooms is conceptualized with respect to these classical definitions of ethos, three concerns arise. The first has to do with the lack of attention in contemporary writing pedagogies to the integral role of audience perception in the credibility construction process. In other words, while classical scholars such as Aristotle, Isocrates, and Quintilian might have differed in their thoughts on the constitution of ethos and its constructed versus genuine nature, all acknowledged, to varying degrees, that ethos is as much an audience's construction as it is a writer's and that such perception of writerly character plays an important role in how that writerly character is assessed. In contrast, contemporary writing pedagogies continue to operate in practice from the assumption that writers are in control of ethos construction and cultivation. Relying on a theory of the self that has agency to do something with words, FYC faculty tend to place utmost focus and importance on the texts students create and on the writerly moves students engage in–leaving largely unexplored the role that their perception of students might play in how those moves are assessed. It is the relationship between perception and ethos inherent in classical literature that led to the selection of participants--faculty rather than students.

Given that faculty reflect the most prevalent audiences for the texts FYC writers produce, ascertaining their perceptions of FYC writers seemed an appropriate methodological choice.

Second, while relying on reputation served ancient speakers well, the reality is that classical notions of ethos served the best interests of a very narrow and homogeneous segment of the population—namely, white, upper-class males already in positions of power. The problem of course is that this notion of ethos assumes a relatively static and stable community of rhetors with access to linguistic and social capital as well as with positionalities, whether ascribed or inhabited, already privileged by their communities. In other words, these classical constructs of ethos do not presume identity variance--the various kinds of identities that we find both in contemporary community college settings and certainly in FYC classrooms. In contrast to their classical counterparts, many of our students enter their discursive moments with marginalized authorial subjectivities--notions of self not always privileged by the communities into which their texts enter. I am reminded here once again of my own academic journey--one which I traversed with normalizing identities that ranged from Mexican immigrant and ESL student, to working class and first-generation college student. Moreover, I am reminded of the explicit and implicit ways that such subjectivities prevented me from speaking or from being heard--of the many silences they created.

On a broader note, as I reflect on the community college campus where I am privileged to teach composition, I witness first-hand the wonderful identity variance of my students in full display. From their varied ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic

backgrounds, to their equally diverse sexual orientations, academic and professional goals, and complicated personal lives--the complex positionalities of our students remind those of us who engage in teaching writing that people do "not step cleanly and wholly from one community to another, but [are] caught instead in an always changing mix of dominant, residual, and emerging discourses" (Harris 17). That is, many of them enter academia with what Ryan, Meyers, and Jones recently referred to as "common, normalizing ethe" (2)--labels such as, first-generation college student, low income, high school dropout, remedial, developmental, at risk, and minority. In many ways then, it was this discursive reality that contemporary community college students face, coupled with the classical notion that the perception of a rhetor's reputation or positionality is an important element of ethos cultivation, that guided this study's primary interest on how faculty participants perceived certain student identity markers.

Finally, the continued reliance by contemporary FYC faculty on the linguistic exchange as the primary site of perceiving ethos clearly leaves unexplored other sites where such perception can also occur. It fails to consider that this kind of credibility, as Bourdieu points out, can also come "to language from outside" (109). And though this sentiment is suggested in Isocrates' emphasis on character development being a product of a sound rhetorical education and Quintilian's preference of "virtuous living in preference to even supreme excellence of speaking" (41), the fact remains that a reliance on the construction of character (ethos) through text continues to be the predominant way that contemporary FYC pedagogy addresses notions of ethos. Unfortunately, such continued emphasis on the text presupposes that contemporary rhetors, such as those

entering FYC community college classrooms, already possess the rhetorical savviness required to successfully cultivate an ethos solely through their linguistic performance. For our purposes in a FYC community college classroom, this presumption is troublesome given many of our students' unfamiliarity with the conventions of academic discourse. Thus, in an effort to explore sites beyond the text where ethos cultivation might be perceived, a second research focus of this study is related to faculty-student interactions and the role they might play in shaping the opinions that faculty make of students as writers.

In light of these limitations discussed with respect to classical notion of ethos, I argue that such rhetorical heritage does not serve contemporary community college students very well. In other words, if reputation and a pre-existing familiarity with the conventions of dominant discourse are as important to a rhetor's credibility as classical orators seemed to suggest, then this project argues that contemporary pedagogies and frameworks related to ethos are ill-suited to help community college students successfully engage in the kinds of discourses they are asked to enter in their FYC classrooms. What is needed then, is a notion of ethos that opens alternative pathways for perceiving ethos–pathways that might be located outside of the linguistic performance. With this in mind, what the forthcoming etymological discussion of ethos seeks to do is to elucidate the potential for perceiving ethos not only through the set of textual practices students perform in texts, but also through a set of socially-situated prediscursive interactions all taking place around the creation of a text.

Part II: Ethos as a Dwelling Place

One of the ways to help us reimagine pathways of perceiving ethos is by uncovering, or rediscovering, the relationship between notions of locality, inhabitance, dwelling, and ethos. Here, I draw from revisionist etymological scholarship to connect ethos to "space, place, or location--[which] helps to re-establish ethos as a social act and as a product of a community's character" (Reynolds, 327; see also Halloran 1982; Rich 1986; LeFevre 1987; Hooks 1989; Ronald 1990; Hyde 2004; Ryan, Myers, and Jones 2016). Here then, Arthur B. Miller's (1974) etymological account of ethos is the most useful because of the way he departs from classical denotations of ethos, which more often than not align ethos with the rhetor's personal character (*eethos*) achieved through the rhetorical argument within the text or with moral/ethical virtue (*eethikee*). According to Miller, one alternative meaning for *ethos* points to notions of habit. Miller argues that this etymological heritage has been often overlooked due to the term's close spelling to *eethos* or *eethikee*. In addition, a secondary meaning for *ethos* is 'custom,' a meaning derived from the closely related term, *etho*, 'an accustomed place.' Together, these alternative meanings help to reconceptualize ethos as a phenomenon closely related to locality as well as the habitual practices that take place therein. They help trace ethos' relational nature--indexing the social context under which ethotic practices are born, propagated, and habituated. This new way of conceiving ethos is further supported by James Donnegan's *Lexicon,* where he argues both that *ethos* can also mean "use; usage--rite," and *etho* can also mean, "to be in the habit of, to do commonly as a habit, or usage…"(as quoted in Miller, 310). Finally, of equal significance are the alternative

definitions for *eethos* (character), such as “an accustomed place,” “haunts,” or “the abodes of men.”

The preceding etymological examination seems adequate enough to demonstrate the potential for a close alignment between *ethos* and *eethos*, which suggests that any usage of the term *ethos* would have also signaled, in the minds of ancient orators, “the speaker’s habits, customs, traditions, or manner of life” as well as the respective physical localities where rhetors acquired such attributes (Miller 310). And for the purpose of this project, this etymological heritage may certainly indicate that when Aristotle referred to a rhetor’s personal character, he was referring to more than just that which is produced and can be perceived through the text. In addition to the text, he was thinking both of dwellings--the physical locales that rhetors inhabit--and of “dwelling, as a way of being in the world,” full of the activities and interactions between rhetors and their respective audiences. And it is such emphasis on interactions that help us reimagine alternative pathways for and means to perceive credibility-construction (Reynolds 140).

Such etymological insights are significant in two important ways. First, the varied lexical heritage of *ethos* shifts our attention from solely the personal or self, to "the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private" (Halloran 60). Through this lens, to perceive ethos is not simply to assess a writer’s ascribed or inhabited personal markers of credibility manifested in the written page; it is also to pay attention to the character of the audience and the integral role that audience plays in ethos. It is a reminder to account for the lived experiences between audience and writers

and the potential for these interactions to "move the audience to conform to the speaker's ethos and modify the audience's habits and values" (Smith 13).

As Michael Hyde notes,

> ...what the audience believes is honorable is more persuasive than what is actually honorable. Determining the audience's beliefs is the key to successful adaptation in terms of building credibility. In this way, ethos dwells not only in the speaker[…] but also in the audience. (6)

My interest here is certainly not to suggest that as composition scholars and practitioners our job is to help students simply assimilate their writerly character and have it aligned to their audience. Such sentiment has and should continue to be critiqued and challenged. Instead, this shift from the self to the audience, from the personal to the conventional, is an important one because it frames ethos not simply as an act of self-expression, but also as a relational process of dwelling where both the writer and audience negotiate, long before a text is written, just precisely whose ideas, values, customs, and conventions will be privileged in that discursive textual moment.

In addition**,** focusing on the close alignment between ethos and notions of dwelling and inhabitance repositions our attention on the available means for ethos development and site for perceiving such development. Regarding the latter, rather than pointing to the rhetor's rhetorical competence or artistic accomplishment manifested on the page, this renewed focus on dwelling metaphors frames pathways for perceiving ethos construction as a process of habituation. Under this framework, a rhetor's personal character (ethos) is first evaluated through the interactions between rhetors and their

respective audiences–interactions where the virtues of a particular community are first negotiated. As Aristotle implies in *Nichomachean Ethics*,

> For the things which we have to learn before we can do them we learn by doing: men become builders by building houses, and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, we become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage. (II, 1)

Here, Aristotle indexes the productive potential of paying closer attention to the interactions between rhetors and their respective audience. More specifically, his emphasis on what rhetors can learn through those interactions about their audiences in relation to certain ethos-related virtues draws our attention away from what is created through the rhetorical argument and instead, towards the activities that comprise the communal lived experience of rhetors and their communities and how such experiences are perceived by an audience. Dwelling, as a metaphor that indexes the interactions between rhetors and audiences, offers a significant alternative for FYC faculty who are in a position to assess community college students' writing–many of whom enter community college classrooms with a stark unfamiliarity with the habits and conventions of academic discourse. Given the fact that there's a "considerable variety in the writing undergraduates do and in the disciplinary approaches they encounter" (Thonney, 348) as they progress through their academic journeys, constructing and/or developing their ethos solely through the rhetorical maneuvers required of them as they enter college becomes a very difficult task. Thus, focusing on the ways that prediscursive activities are perceived

by FYC faculty opens up the potential for examining alternative sites where the writerly opinion of students is created and shaped.

Ethos as a relational process reminds us that the kinds of activities a rhetor engages in alongside the audiences to whom their texts are addressed--their ways of dwelling--can perhaps be studied as a compilation of ethos-related activities that surround the creation and delivery of rhetorical arguments. Here, a successful rhetor is one who, in Burkean terms, engages in activities that are perceived by their audience to promote identification between writer and audience whereby the two "may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an 'identification' that does not deny their distinctness" (Burke, 1020). And while this process of identification, where both writer and audience learn to better understand and ultimately, identify with each other's virtues and habits, may take place through the text, I am interested in the ways that this process is manifested through the interactions that occur outside of the text between FYC faculty and FYC students.

Reviewing feminist scholarship on ethos and locality, we find examples of what it might mean for rhetors to utilize 'dwelling' as a metaphor in order to bridge the gap between their positionalities[9] and their respective discursive authority. Running through these arguments is a self-reflexive disposition (Royster and Kirsch, 2012); a commitment by feminist writers to be radically transparent about their positionalities and knitting these throughout their discourses. Thus, when writers like Adrienne Rich for example, refer to

[9]The notion of positionality running through the feminist scholarship reviewed here aligns questions of identity with broader questions of power unevenly and asymmetrically distributed across social relations.

her body as “the geography closest to her,” she is practicing and utilizing these dwelling practices to claim her authorial credibility as a woman. Dwelling, as a credibility cultivating practice, becomes an act of explicitly locating oneself on the text to recognize, at least for Rich, her “white skin, the places it has taken [her], [and] the places it has not let [her] go” (215). For Patricia Hill Collins (1991) and bell hooks (1989), their ability to be heard emanates from dwelling in the margins—acknowledging early on in their respective discourses their positionalities and in some cases, even including marginal discourses, such as journal entries, to disrupt the dominant discourse of the academy. For Patricia Harkin, dwelling is manifested in the way she intentionally recounts and describes her writing process in a manuscript, explicitly backtracking through her thought process, moving between past and present texts, in an attempt to take responsibility for her positioning (1989). Extending these previous arguments, Karen Burke LeFevre (1986) envisions 'dwelling' not necessarily in the marginal borderlands, but situated in the 'between,' in the symbolic space where the personal and public merge.

Perhaps most relevant to this project is Nedra Reynolds’ work on dwelling in the 'in between,’ where she asks us to pay attention to "the rhetorical strategies writers use to locate themselves, their texts, and the particular discursive communities they are mediating within and between" (333). Reynolds extends her argument more deeply in *Geographies of Writing*, where she asks us to “re-imagine acts of writing through spatial practices of the everyday--walking, mapping, and *dwelling*” (3). Most germane to this current project, however, is how she aligns spatial practices, or practices of inhabitance and embodiment, to dwelling. In examining what these dwelling practices look like in the

body, homes, and institutions, she opens the possibility of studying these practices outside of the text--a possibility that this project seeks to extend. And most recently, Ryan et al. (2016) combine discussions of character, custom, and dwelling as they attempt to recuperate the social, spatial, and relational dimensions of ethos. Echoing Miller, these authors ultimately argue for a contemporary notion of ethos, or a 'feminist ecological ethe', which perceives of credibility construction as a "negotiated, communal act rather than an essentialized reputation" (6).

Though not exhaustive, the scholarship above indexes the discursive potential of positioning notions of locality and inhabitance as pivotal elements for perceiving ethos construction. As noted above, discursive credibility may be cultivated when writers explicitly acknowledge and weave into their discourses traces of their identities, positionalities, or locations. Such rhetorical maneuvers that these varied feminist scholars highlight reflect a relational and situated notion of ethos where writers dwell in their texts through a process of radically owning those static markers ascribed to them and taking responsibility for those labels' influence on their ways of knowing and being. They serve as concrete examples of the productive potential of what can be gained when we re-imagine credibility construction through the lens of dwelling that indexes processes of inhabitance and habituation. And while these maneuvers are predominantly textual in nature, they do signal the existence of embodied dwelling practices beyond the spatial scale of a text--specifically those interactions between faculty and students. As such, they lay the foundation for the secondary interest that emerged in this study–to map out and

better understand at least one kind of lived rhetorical transactions in which writers and audiences engage–interactions between faculty and students.

As classical scholars such Aristotle, Isocrates, and Quintilian noted above--if ethos dwells as much in the audience as it does in the writer, and if, ethos construction may constitute a prediscursive dwelling process where writer and audience can negotiate the kinds of virtues, attributes, conventions, and dispositions that will be most privileged when they are manifested in the text--then it is imperative to better understand the kinds of dwelling activities that take place in two-year FYC classrooms surrounding the creation of a text. Of note here is the scholarship published over the last 30 plus years regarding student-faculty interactions, one kind of dwelling activity of specific interest of this study. (Snow, 1973; Volkwein et al. 1986; Terenzini and Wright 1987; Fusani 1994; Jaasma and Koper 1999; Kuh and Hu 2001; Nadler and Nadler 2001; Cotten and Wilson, 2006). Though this preceding research has primarily been focused on the relationship between student-faculty interactions and student academic achievement, intellectual growth, career aspirations, and personal satisfaction, the scholarship does reveal a trend of a general lack of contact[10] between faculty and students in contemporary FYC sites. Given this reported lack of interactions outside of the classroom between faculty and students in contemporary discursive sites such as FYC classrooms, one important aim of this study is to obtain a preliminary understanding of the landscape of interactions that might be available to faculty and students or that they are already engaged in. To do so, it

[10] Contact is generally defined as any kind of interaction between faculty and students that occurred outside of the classroom.

is necessary to define how interactions are being conceptualized in this study. Thus, by interactions, I specifically refer to the written and spoken interactions between FYC faculty and students that revolve around the creation of a text--interactions that take place during the planning, drafting, and revising stages of a document. Understanding the nature of these interactions, the role they might play in shaping how faculty perceive students as writers, is an integral first step in exploring their credibility construction potential.

Together, the aforementioned scholarship on ethos guided this study's methodology in three specific ways. First, the emphasis on audience perception inherent in classical conceptions of ethos informed the selection of this study's participants. As stated earlier, given that FYC community college faculty are the most prevalent and immediate audiences of student texts, documenting their perceptions of students is an important way to align the literature with this study's design. Additionally, the broader relationship between ethos, character, and reputation discussed in the classical scholarship shaped the research questions that guided this study as well as the data analysis process. Finally, the etymological discussion on ethos with respect to dwelling, in conjunction with contemporary feminist scholarship on place and relation, led to this project's interest in participants' perceptions of interactions between faculty and students. Shaped in these ways by the ethos scholarship, the methodology described in the next chapter was largely guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the general perceptions that faculty have of community college FYC students?
2. What are the kinds of interactions that community college FYC faculty and students engage in during the course of their semester?
3. How do faculty perceive these interactions?

With these broad questions in mind, this study then seeks to explore and extend what it means to 'dwell' to more broadly account for the interactions that occur between rhetors and those who ascribe value to the texts rhetors create. Drawing the emphasis away from the linguistic exchange as a pathway for perceiving ethos construction, this study aims to better understand how interactions between faculty and students may shape faculty perception of students' writerly identities.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## Theoretical Framework

The prevailing assumptions that this study seeks to complicate is the role at perception plays in ethos construction as well as the reliance on the text as the primary site where audiences perceive writerly ethos. As the literature review above evidenced, classical notions of ethos privileged the discursive exchange as the primary site available to audiences to perceive writers' credibility. Whether ethos was based on a preexisting or constructed character, early orators sought to influence, persuade, and move classical audiences by the words delivered through the rhetorical argument. Also limited in classical notions of credibility construction is the role of a rhetor's ascribed or inhabited identities. Again, as discussed in the aforementioned literature review, these orators for the most part entered their discursive moments from positionalities that granted them access to a certain kind of linguistic and social capital--and it was access to such capital that these orators sought to leverage when they entered the polis, funerals, or ceremonies. Whether it was their preexisting social, financial, academic, or political standing, the reality is that classical notions of ethos served the rhetorical needs of a highly privileged homogenous community of rhetors.

What is needed then is a theoretical framework related to notions of language, identity, and writerly credibility that offers us lenses that might help to transcend these limitations for community college FYC students. First, we need a framework that accounts for certain sociological conditions, such as the tacit perceptions held by

audiences, that might shape how credibility construction is perceived. Second, we also need a theory that allows us to widen the lens of discursive exchange. Here, I specifically seek a theory of discourse that places equal attention to the social and relational as it does to the power of words; a theory that more explicitly acknowledges the integral role that a writer's social position with respect to their audiences play in how texts are perceived by those communities to which the audiences belong.

Given these limitations in classical notions of ethos, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Discourse informed the overall research design of this study. First, in *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu (1991) directly questions the very illocutionary force derived from a possibility to do things with words. Throughout this text, Bourdieu continues to question this possibility by offering us an institutional perspective of discourse. He posits that a writer's credibility is, a) deeply rooted in the institutional frameworks where writer and audience interact and, b) is determined by their positionality with respect to each other and "the access he [the writer] can have to the language of the institution, that is, to the official, orthodox and legitimate speech" (109). Thus, any efficacy attributed to a writer must be understood not as the product of what the writer was able to accomplish within the text, but as the result of the writer's external authority that he or she brought into the text in the first place. As Bourdieu notes, "The symbolic efficacy of words...is exercised only insofar as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorized to do so" (116). Thus, by separating the utterance from the institutional conditions from which it arose, Bourdieu opens up an opportunity to frame credibility

construction as a process that can be perceived outside of any linguistic performance found in a text.

With the focus now on the conditions under which texts are created, Bourdieu also indexes an interactional perspective through which ethos might be studied. His shift from discursive textual exchanges to socially symbolic ones calls our attention to the social and relational processes and activities that often surround the creation of a text. And for the purpose of this study, this shift prompts one to pay closer attention to the interactions between writers and their audiences because many of these interactions, or "social rituals" as Bourdieu calls them, often occur prior to any discursive textual exchange, and their role in determining just how much symbolic efficacy in words will be available to the writer when he or she completes any given text is one that this study seeks to explore.

For FYC writers enrolled in community college then, Bourdieu's theory of discourse is integral in two ways. First, Bourdieu's conception of Discourse, with its emphasis on the institutional dimension of language, reminds us that when FYC writers enter discursive moments already ascribed with any identity labels of deficiency--illiterate, underprepared, at risk, first-generation, high school dropout, remedial, developmental (hooks, 1989; Schwalbe et al., 2000; VanderPyl, 2015; Brooks, 2003; Clifton & Harter, 2003; Gregory, 2014; Soria & Stubblefield, 2015; Dix et al., 2020), they are simultaneously positioned to create texts from positionalities that are far different than their classical counterparts; positionalities that I argue, classical and current

theories of ethos, as well as its contemporary pedagogical approaches, are not equipped to address and overcome.

Second, Bourdieu facilitates our understanding of why and how traditional notions of ethos, which too often privilege the credibility construction moves that a writer makes on a page, are simply too limiting to aid them in negotiating their writerly ethe. As previously mentioned, many community college FYC students come to our classes struggling to say (write) the right thing. For Bartholomae, the underlying difficulty resides in students' attempt "to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language," and "learn to speak our language" (4). On the other hand, rather than placing all of the burden on students, advocates of the students' right to their own language movement have historically affirmed "students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style" ("Committee on CCCC Language: Background Statement" 1974). And more recently, in their call for a pedagogical "space for students to tell us what they know about writing" to ultimately create a corpus of shared language between writing faculty and students, Hannah and Saidy (2014) frame students' continued struggle to say (write) the right thing as a slightly different kind of intellectual endeavor, one that situates students as translators and negotiators of language. Given our field's consistent interest in helping writers say (write) the right thing in academia and the myriad of pedagogical and theoretical calls to address it, Bourdieu's claim, that "the power of words is nothing other than the delegated power of the spokesperson," which

consequently calls us to attend to “the social conditions in which words are employed” (107), opens new ways to engage in this work

In light of Bourdieu’s work on discourse, the qualitative research study below seeks to build on this work in the following ways. First, whereas Bourdieu’s discourse framework turns our scholarly gaze to the social and institutional conditions under which prediscursive credibility is negotiated, at best, we are left with a vague notion of how to conceptualize the conditions under which such negotiation takes place. What is needed is a more precise understanding of these conditions as well as of the activities, or “social rituals,” which take place in contemporary community college writing classrooms where credibility is consecrated or legitimated. By focusing on first obtaining a general understanding of the kinds of perceptions that faculty participants have, a principal aim of this study is to provide a more concrete understanding of the sociological conditions under which students enter community college FYC classrooms.

In addition to Bourdieu, James Gee’s theory of Discourse also informs the overall research design of this proposed study. First, Gee notes that (1989) “At any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and (appearing) to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes” (6). For Gee, a writer’s identity is inextricably linked to language use. Writers, it appears, must enter discursive moments with a keen awareness of their positionalities relative to the norms and values of the discourse community from which their texts seek acceptance. Beyond awareness, it also appears that writers must understand the language conventions of the target community *and* know how to put those conventions into appropriate

language use. In other words, successful writers are those who can bridge the gap between their positionalities and their discursive authority by possessing and demonstrating both a certain level of linguistic and social acumen. Like Bourdieu, Gee's theory of discourse draws our attention to the social conditions that surround the creation of a text. However, unlike Bourdieu, Gee does seem to assign some illocutionary force to the moves that writers make in their texts.

Finally, this research project attempts to build on theories of discourse by describing, based on the reported perceptions by FYC faculty participants, the tacit ways that their perceptions of writerly credibility may be shaped by their interactions with students. In other words, by specifically asking faculty participants to reflect on their perceptions of the prediscursive interactions between themselves and students, a secondary aim of this project is to obtain a landscape of interactions between FYC faculty and FYC writers that may give us a clearer understanding of the kinds of activities that surround the creation of a text and perhaps more importantly, provide us with an nascent understanding of how those activities might shape the extent to which those texts are deemed credible. Here, Ruth Amossy's (2001) notion of a prior ethos serves as a productive lens to highlight the need to account for the prediscursive factors that shape and influence how writers' ethos is perceived. As she argues in her concise analysis of Henry Barbusse's and Jean-Marie Le Pen's political and literary texts, a rhetor's prior ethos, which can be thought of as " the institutional position of the orator and the degree of authority which this confers upon him," serves as the "background against which ethos

is built in discourse through verbal means" (20). And it is precisely how this prior ethos may be shaped through interactions that this study seeks to explore.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

My rationale for using a qualitative design is twofold. First, as Mayan (2009) notes, "Qualitative inquiry is primarily naturalistic, interpretive, and inductive" (11). In terms of its naturalistic nature, this study focuses on the naturally occurring phenomenon of faculty-student interactions in FYC community college classrooms. By specifically focusing on how FYC faculty perceive these interactions, this study represents my attempt to interpret the meaning faculty participants have attached to this phenomenon. In addition, though this case study is grounded in certain sensitizing concepts[11] such as notions of ethos, identity, and dwelling that are described in the literature review, I have approached each instance of the phenomenon separately in order to account for the singular context and complexity present in each participant's narrative.

Finally, I chose a qualitative design for this study because it allowed me to carefully consider the role that my experiences, perspectives, and roles would play in my interactions with, interpretations of, the research site. Espousing such a reflexive disposition (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Denzin, 1997, Peshkin, 1988) towards my research prompts me to acknowledge that I have always tended to gravitate towards questions of credibility, authority, ethos, and power dynamics in discourse. Though for many years it

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[11]Here and throughout this project, I use the term sensitizing concepts as a methodological term to refer to what Sara Tracy (2012) calls, "interpretative devices…that serve as jumping-off points or lenses for qualitative study " (29).

seemed convenient to simply conclude that my interest in these subjects stemmed from my scholarly ties to composition studies, briefly surveying my personal, professional, and academic journeys, I can see clearly instances (ex: one of the few minority students in K-12 Catholic education, first generation college student, newcomer One-Year-Only faculty at MCC, etc.) where my positionality as a newcomer to communities indexed many of the same questions about authority, credibility, and power structures. Acknowledging these moments of contact with language, power and authority certainly prompts me to monitor the questions I ask, the assumptions I bring to the study, and the conclusions I make from the data.

Background of Site/Participants

The site I used to explore faculty perceptions of their interactions with students is an English department that is part of a community college within the Phoenix, AZ metropolitan area, serving about 21,000 students, with an average age of 27, and from the following backgrounds: 49% White, 25% Hispanic, 6% Black, 4% Asian, 4% American Indian/Alaskan, 6% Race Unknown, 2% two or more races, 3% International. The English department employs about 35 full-time faculty and about 70 adjunct faculty. In general, the FYC courses on which faculty reflections were based have twenty-four students enrolled. Additionally, though the interview questions regarding faculty-student interactions asked faculty participants to draw primarily upon their experiences with face-to-face courses, all faculty participants have experience teaching in other modalities such as asynchronous and hybrid.

I conducted one case study involving six FYC faculty (see Appendix A for Recruitment Letter). To maintain their anonymity, I will refer to the six participants by the following names: Herbert, Sue, Marissa, Stuart, Rose, and Elliot. I used a theoretical-construct sampling technique, in which my participants were "chosen because they meet certain theoretical characteristics or conceptual frameworks" (Tracy 136). First, all six participants recruited for this study had over ten years of experience teaching composition in community college settings. Their FYC teaching experience at this particular academic setting is important to note, as any conclusions, implications, or arguments suggested in the findings are most relevant to community college contexts. Second, all six participants had full-time employment status at the academic institution during the duration of the study and five out of the six had achieved tenured status or held tenured-track positions during the study period. Participants' employment status was an important factor of consideration given my positionality within the department. As a tenured faculty member and the department's past writing program administrator, I purposefully recruited participants whose authority and status were relatively similar to mine. As much as possible, I wanted to minimize the potential effect that my current and/or previous role within the department could have on how comfortable participants felt during the interviews.

One final noteworthy point about this study's site and participants is related to the COVID pandemic under which all of the data was collected. Though all participants' answers in the first interview referenced the pandemic in different ways, the fact remains that none of the participants during the study were teaching any face-to-face courses.

Thus, I must point out that their answers concerning any interaction with students constituted a reflection of this dynamic from previous semesters. Thus, their inability to draw from existing experiences in their reflections is a factor that must be taken into consideration when reviewing the findings and implications of this study.

Interpretive Framework for Research Methods

The defining characteristic about my proposed methods is that they arise out of an interpretive framework (Mayan 2016). In this study, I am concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of participants' subjective interpretation of their interactions with students and my own subjective interpretation of the meanings attached to their first-hand accounts. Thus, influenced by both an interpretative framework and a social constructivist theory of knowledge, my methodology is characterized by several major tenets: 1) knowledge is socially constructed; 2) a singular observable reality does not exist (Merriam and Tisdell 2015); and 3) the researcher's observations and analysis are theory-laden.

In addition to this study's reliance on an interpretative framework, I plan on being flexible instead of adopting a particular approach to the research. Following Putman (1983), "Although the exact goals and methods vary, interpretivists focus on the historically unique situation; they study naturally occurring phenomena; and they approach their task in a...flexible, iterative manner" (11, 12). Acknowledging and privileging the different perspectives my participants will have regarding their interactions and their singular historical context, my aim is not to simply generalize one meaning about their experience.

Methods

*Phase I: Piloting the Research Instruments*

In this initial phase, I disseminated the interview protocol to a group of three faculty. The purpose of this initial phase was to invite initial participant feedback on the design of the research instrument. This feedback was important in a number of ways. First, the feedback was used to ensure that the language used in the instruments was one that was accessible and understandable to all participants. Second, this initial pilot left open the opportunity for participants to suggest alternative questions that might elucidate unanticipated focal points of inquiry. Finally, piloting the instrument helped tremendously in determining if the interview questions would indeed produce data that is relevant to the research question and purpose of this proposed study.

*Phase II: Semi-structured Interview I*

This phase involved six participant interviews. In order to build rapport with participants (Olson, 2016), I conducted one-hour interviews which, though modified, mirrored in purpose Irving Seidman's (2013) first interview within the three-part interview series that he recommends. As Olson notes, these early interviews are meant to "create a space within which the participant feels free to tell his or her story" (39). The interview protocol for these preliminary interviews (see appendix B) was designed to encourage participants to begin informally reflecting upon the sensitizing concepts that inform this study; namely, notions of identity and credibility construction. In this phase of the study, I was particularly interested in what participants might reveal about these concepts as they reflected on the prior experiences that have shaped and continue to influence their

current lived experience as faculty. For example, as participants reflected on their perceptions of working at a community college and more specifically of working with community college students, I anticipated that their answers would perhaps reveal tacit perceptions about their students that related to notions of students' identity and past reputation--both being concepts relevant to credibility construction. In other words, the early part of this interview was intentionally focused in obtaining a general sense of how participants conceptualized FYC students outside of any specific, formal discursive contexts (like writing a paper).

Additionally, these interviews were also an opportunity for participants to reflect more explicitly on their interactions with students--another major focus of this study. On the one hand, having participants describe the kinds of interactions they typically have with students in or outside of class was a first attempt at obtaining a general portrait of how faculty and students come into contact during a typical semester. On the other hand, questions that asked participants to reflect on the potential impact interactions might have on their perception of students were specifically aimed at exploring the potential role that interactions might play in shaping participants' perceptions of students.

Finally, the last part of this first interview asked participants to explicitly reflect on notions of ethos. My rationale for placing this question at the end of the interview protocol rather than at the beginning was largely due to my interest in eliciting participants' reflections on ethos that were more broadly aligned with their perceptions of and interactions with students rather than with any past experience with ethos scholarship. At this point in the interview protocol, the aim was to determine the extent to

which participants' answers aligned with Aristotelian conceptions of ethos. Thus, questions such as, "what characterizes a "good writer,"" or questions that asked participants to discuss the kinds of skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions that might be helpful for students to possess as they enter a writing class, were meant to situate their perceptions within the aforementioned tripartite construct of ethos involving virtue, practical wisdom, and goodwill.

*Phase III Semi-Structured Interview II*

This third phase took place about six weeks after the initial interview, as it was during this six-week period that some preliminary coding was done that informed the kinds of questions I asked in the second interview (see Appendix C). This phase of the study gave me an opportunity to follow up with participants on some trends that had begun to emerge in initial coding. For instance, three of the questions asked in this third phase prompted participants to reflect and expand on specific answers given during the first interview. Thus, one way to characterize the difference between the second and third phases of this study would be as a gradual shift from broad to specific. A great example of this shift is evidenced in the questions having to do with interactions (see Table 1 below). Rather than trying to simply obtain a general sense of the kinds of interactions participants had with students as well as elicit their general perceptions of these interactions, I used this second interview to examine any kind of relationship between the kinds of student-faculty interactions reported by participants and their perceptions of students. For instance, in the second interview, participants were asked to more explicitly align a particular interaction with a change in their perception of students. As I report in

chapter 4, this shift from broad to specific made it possible to identify which interactions seemed to be more closely aligned with a change in how faculty perceive students.

| Coding from Second to Third Phase of Study | |
|---|---|
| First Interview | Second Interview |
| 1. During a typical f2f course, what kinds of interactions do you have with students in or outside of class? By interactions, I mean any f2f, phone, or digital communication that you might have with a student during a typical semester.<br><br>2. How do these interactions impact your perception of them as students?<br><br>3. Do any of the interactions you have had with students ever come to mind when evaluating/responding to their writing (i.e., paper/writing project)? | 1. In the previous interview, the following interactions with students were the most prevalent discussed by participants.<br>○ 10-15 minutes before class starts/right after class<br>○ Office hours<br>○ Digital (email, LMS announcements, etc.)<br>○ Class time<br>○ Outside of class events (poetry readings, etc.)<br>2. Can you discuss how each of these interactions might help to change or solidify your initial perception of students?<br><br>3. As you think back to the evaluations of student papers from this semester or previous semesters, which of the above-mentioned interactions ever come to mind when you are in the midst of reading their final drafts? |

Table 1

Data Triangulation

One last note about the phase II of this study has to do with the triangulation of the data gathered. One strategy for validation of the findings had to do with how differently I approached the first and second interviews. As previously mentioned, though some definite themes emerged after the preliminary interview in phase I, the questions asked during the second interview were used to determine if the inferences I had made after engaging with the first interview data were consistent with those I eventually made

after analyzing the subsequent data. The goal in the second interview was to establish some kind of conceptual convergence and, whenever possible, identify contradictory and/or inconsistent data across interviews.

Another triangulation strategy is related to the alternative theoretical frameworks that were considered for this study and the extent to which each framework helped explain the findings from this study in similar ways. As previously mentioned, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of discourse was fundamental to this study because it provided a theoretical grounding for thinking about credibility construction as a prediscursive process. His focus on the context outside of the textual discursive exchange was pivotal in focusing this study's research gaze towards interactions between faculty and students. However, when the initial findings of this study were analyzed through an alternative theory of discourse, namely, James Gee's, some similar (though not identical) conclusions could be drawn. As I alluded to earlier in this chapter, Gee contends that language use is inextricably linked to notions of identity. In doing so, he asks us to account for writers' ways of being in the world--for their "*doing-being-valuing-believing combinations*" (6). Referring to these combinations as "identity kits," Gee not only again highlights the important role that identity and identity markers play in Discourse, he also calls our attention to *doing.* Thus, to understand, enter, participate, and ultimately master Discourse, writers must recognize that *what* they say, *how* they say it, *who they are* while saying it (identity), and *what they do* (interactions) while saying it (5) matters if their texts are to be accepted and valued by the community. Framing the preliminary findings of this study through this alternative construct of discourse, with its similar emphasis on

identity and the social milieu surrounding discursive exchanges, enabled me to achieve the kind of theoretical triangulation that Bazeley (2013) argues may be obtained when a researcher is able to reach “rival explanations” of the data when filtered through alternative theoretical lenses.

Use of Analytical Memos

Throughout each research phase, I completed journal entries regarding the participants, phenomenon, and research process under examination. The purpose of these entries, or memos, was to begin to articulate the “reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding [the] phenomen[a]” of interactions and ethos cultivation (Weston et al., 394). At first, these early memos (see Appendix D) represented my initial sensemaking attempt of the gathered data from the first interview. These memos were a product of simply asking, “What is going on in here (data)?” In the early stages of analysis, these memos served to figure out fundamental themes or stories that were beginning to emerge from the data. For example, after reading for the first time through participants’ answers to questions in the first interview regarding their perceptions of students, it was while writing an analytic memo that I first categorized their perceptions along the following four themes[12]:

1. Students’ academic preparedness
2. Students’ dispositions/motivations

[12]For a full description of how I arrived at these four themes, see Appendix D.

3. Students' complicated lives
4. Students' Socioeconomic status

At other times, these memos served to define codes and to think through how certain codes were related. For example, after re-reading through the same interview 1 answers regarding participants' perceptions of students mentioned above, it became clear that the way that participants were discussing students' dispositions and motivations respectively aligned very strongly with Aristotle's notion of Virtue, a key element of classical conceptions of ethos. It was precisely through writing a memo that I was able to first discern and ultimately articulate the relationship between these two larger themes (dispositions and motivations) and the code, Virtue.

Overall, the analytic memos were integral in the creation of codes, attaching meaning to codes, and in discerning a connection between codes. However, one last function of these memos is related to determining emergent claims from the data. After data analysis (see full description below) was completed, I wrote three analytic memos over a span of four days where I was trying to discern methodological alignment between my overall research questions and the ways that the codes were (or not) attending to them. Through these memos, I was able to visualize for the first time a number of potential claims that emerged from the data; claims that were most salient to the research question and motivating rationale for my study.

Data Analysis Process

*Primary Cycle Coding*

After conducting the two phases of interviews described above, I hired a transcription service company to transcribe the 12 interviews. Once those interviews were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy, my first immersion with the interview data was informed by the aforementioned sensitizing concepts that related to my overall research interests, questions, and agenda. For this study, the following concepts (see Table 2 below), which materialized as a result of my prior theoretical understandings (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) and classroom teaching experience, served as preliminary lenses that helped organize and experience my first experience with the data.

| List of Sensitizing Concepts | |
|---|---|
| Sensitizing Concepts | Questions from Interview Protocol related to sensitizing concepts |
| Ethos | 1.What characterizes a "good writer" in your class?<br>2.Overall, what do you hope students' aspirations are for using writing outside of the classroom?<br>3.What skills, knowledge, dispositions do you believe would be helpful for students to possess as they enter your writing class? |
| Identity | 1.Why did you choose to ultimately work at a CC?<br>2.What is it like to work with community college students?<br>3.How would you describe the average student at this cc?<br>4.What are the factors in your students' lives you believe have the biggest impact (positively or negatively) on their success as writers in your ENG 101/102 course? |
| Dwelling Practices | 1.During a typical f2f course, what kinds of interactions do you have with students in or outside of class? By interactions, I mean any f2f, phone, or digital communication that you might have with a student during a typical semester.<br>2.How do these interactions impact your perception of them as students?<br>3.Do any of the interactions you have had with students ever come to mind when evaluating/responding to their writing (i.e., paper/writing project)? |

Table 2

As table 2 demonstrates, these initial sensitizing concepts (ethos, identity, and dwelling practices) provided a way to enter and begin to make meaning of the data. Overall, they reflected my preliminary coding efforts. For example, as I initially began reading through participants' answers related to their perceptions of working with community college students or more broadly, working at a community college, the initial concepts (along with their related topics) helped me separate the 1st interview data into smaller, thematic units for further analysis. Though I understand that qualitative inquiry is a predominantly inductive activity (Mayan 2016), I do acknowledge that a deductive approach originally shaped the initial data analysis process. In other words, notions of ethos, identity, and dwelling, originally introduced in the literature review, narrowed the scholarly lens that initially informed my early coding efforts.

However, after this initial foray into the data, I employed a more inductive approach during primary-cycle coding. Here, following Saldaña's (2015) coding scheme, I utilized a combination of the following grammatical primary cycle methods:

1. Attribute Coding: data management, participant information, context
2. Structural or Holistic Coding: to initially categorize similarities, differences, and relationships in the data (preliminary technique)
3. Subcoding: to enrich early general or structural code entries
4. Values Coding: to reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs

In this first cycle, I used these coding methods to label certain sections of the interview transcripts where it was clear that participants, when asked to directly or indirectly reflect

on their perceptions of community college students, repeatedly framed these perceptions along four distinct themes:

a. students' academic preparedness
b. students' dispositions/motivations
c. students' socioeconomic status
d. students' complicated lives.

I must note here that the emergence of the first three themes was heavily influenced by classical scholarship on ethos discussed in chapter 2. For instance, during this first coding cycle, students' past academic experiences (education) and socioeconomic status (wealth)--two factors related to ethos that Aristotle attributed to a rhetor's past reputation, were already on my mind as I first entered the interview data. Additionally, Aristotelian notions of virtue, which I also describe in chapter 2, helped me identify and classify certain sections of the data as related to students' dispositions and/or motivations. Table 3 below contains excerpts from interview data that reflect these themes. Thus, for example, some faculty participants shared that many community college students entering FYC courses come in with a mentality and desire to move quickly through classes. Another participant, when discussing what it is like to work with community college students, reflected on how complicated those students' lives were who entered FYC courses. And across the board, all participants signaled students' socioeconomic status--focusing on the students' lack of food security, need to work multiple jobs, and overall lack of resources.

| Ways That Participants Framed Their Perceptions of Students | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| College Preparedness | Dispositions/Motivations | Complicated Lives | Socioeconomic Status |
| unrealistic expectations of college timeline<br><br>A proclivity to wanting to move quickly through classes<br><br>Prone to fail classes<br><br>Have a difficult time seeing/making connections between content<br><br>Tend to be more at risk<br><br>Ill-prepared<br><br>Street smarts<br><br>Not necessarily after a degree<br><br>Linguistically casual/informal<br><br>Unaware of how to be a college student<br><br>Don't know the culture of the academy | unrealistic expectations of college timeline<br><br>A proclivity to wanting to move quickly through classes<br><br>Resourceful<br><br>Willing to build community<br><br>Lower expectations of themselves<br><br>Not necessarily after a degree<br><br>Insecurity issues<br><br>Motivated<br><br>Practical<br><br>Want to finish<br><br>Maintaining their motivation<br><br>More invested<br><br>Just give me my grades | life experience<br><br>Complicated lives<br><br>Severe depression<br><br>Worked all night<br><br>Lack of family support<br><br>Balancing so much in their lives<br><br>Pressed for time<br><br>They do a lot<br><br>Family providers<br><br>Multiple jobs<br><br>Work graveyard shifts<br><br>Lack of access<br><br>Mental health issues<br><br>Constrained by affective and life factors<br><br>Life circumstances | Family providers<br><br>Multiple jobs<br><br>Lack of resources<br><br>Lack of food security<br><br>Economically insecure<br><br>Lack of access<br><br>Can't afford college<br><br>Financially challenged<br><br>Want to avoid debt<br><br>Finances<br><br>Basic needs<br><br>Low socioeconomic status<br><br>Economic challenges<br><br>lacks basic needs (food/house) |

Table 3

As aforementioned, during my first immersion with the data and primary cycle coding, I wrote a number of analytic memos throughout (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2012;

Bazeley, 2013) to more fully concretize the themes/insights embedded in the data--and my emerging understanding of their meanings and their relevance to my research focus. These memos were instrumental in my ability to align the data back to the scholarship that informed and shaped the study. One example of this alignment is related to the column in table 3 above labeled, 'dispositions/motivations.' As stated above, it was clear that as participants directly and/or indirectly reflected on their experience of working with community college students, their answers indexed their perceptions of an array of student dispositions and student motivations. It was while writing an analytic memo (see excerpt below) that I first made the connection between Aristotelian notions of Virtue and the kinds of dispositions and motivations that I was finding in the data.

**Excerpt from Analytic Memo: 10/01/2020**

*I wonder if any of these perceptions could be analyzed along Aristotle's 3-dimensional view of ethos: Virtue, Wisdom, and Goodwill. I wonder if there is a link between the examples of motivations and dispositions that are emerging from the data and how Aristotle defines Virtue. If these concepts are related, this might present an opportunity to more directly align participants' reported student perceptions and notions of ethos…*

This memo prompted me to reflect on, "*Ethos* Dwells Pervasively," where Craig Smith breaks down the Aristotelian Virtue into two parts, moral and intellectual. Regarding the former, he states that it "is concerned with motivations and actions that lie on a continuum running from excess to deficiency" (7). Later on, he refers to these motivations as dispositions in speakers. This first initial connection, made possible by the reflective space that the analytic memo afforded me, was important because it helped me align the data to the literature that informed this study and as a result, begin reframing the

perceptions reported by participants related to student motivations and dispositions as perceptions related to examples of Virtue--a characteristic of ethos. This iterative process, which included engaging with the data, writing analytic memos, labeling and categorizing the interview transcripts into distinct sections, culminated in a number of preliminary codes that informed the second cycle coding process.

*Second-Cycle Coding*

As Bazeley (2013) notes, the transition from primary to second-cycle coding can be difficult and awkward. Thus, before fully engaging in second-cycle coding, I reviewed the aforementioned analytic memos, the initial labels I had used to separate the interview data, and first-cycle codes. Using this recursive approach as well as employing axial coding (Charmaz, 2006) techniques to reassemble the data, I was drawn back to the disciplinary concepts and once again reorganized and reconceptualized my initial coding efforts. At this point, coding was also being influenced by the second interview data. In many ways, this data from the second interview was instrumental in confirming some of the themes identified in the first phase of coding as well as in refining those codes. For example, reading table 4 below from left to right, the evolution of these coding phases can be seen. Perhaps the most noteworthy observation from this table is the reorganization of the secondary codes in relation to the primary. Here, one of the original sensitizing concepts listed in the first column was the notion of identity. This concept was used to initially make sense of ways that participants directly or indirectly described community college students. At times, their descriptions referenced students' mental health well-being. At other times, community college students were mainly described in

terms of their dispositions. And still at other times, it was through the lens of their behaviors or academic preparedness to which their identities seemed to be linked. During my first coding efforts, identity as a code encompassed a wide range of themes (see column 2) I originally conceptualized as related to markers of identity. However, during second-cycle coding, as column 3 demonstrates, the code referencing identity was replaced by two separate codes specifically related to past reputation and virtue–two ethos-related characteristics.

| Evolution of Coding Phases | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sensitizing Concepts | Primary Codes | Secondary Codes |
| Dwelling Practices<br><br>Ethos:<br>• Virtue<br>• Wisdom<br>• Goodwill<br>• Past-Reputation<br><br>Identity | Domains of Interactions<br>• Digital<br>• 10-15 min before/after class<br>• In-class<br>• Office hours<br>• College-wide events<br>Identity<br>• Dispositions/motivations<br>• Academic Preparedness<br>• Socioeconomic References<br>• Behaviors<br>• Mental Health | Liminal Nature of Interactions<br>• Location<br>• Purpose<br>• Formality<br><br>Past Reputation<br>• Academic Preparedness<br>• Socio-economic references<br>• Mental Health<br><br>Virtue<br>• Dispositions/motivations<br>• Behaviors |

Table 4

Beyond reorganization and reconceptualization of codes, as Bazeley also notes, new themes tend to emerge. During this second cycle, one new theme that emerged from the data related to the role that interactions between faculty and students seemed to play

on faculty's perceptions regarding student dispositions and motivations. Up to this point in the coding process, codes related to interactions had primarily focused on typology. In other words, as column 2 above shows, early coding efforts had resulted in the emergence of five domains of faculty-student interactions. However, as participants broadly reflected on the collective nature of these interactions during the first interview and more specifically during the second interview, the liminal nature of interactions materialized. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 5, their liminality in relation to location, purpose, and formality provides one possible explanation to how and why interactions between faculty and students seem to shape the former's' writerly opinions of their students. And it was precisely this theme that became a point of focus during the second and subsequent coding cycles.

*From Coding to "Big Picture" Themes*

After this secondary coding cycle, I engaged in a recursive data analysis process consisting of writing additional analytic memos, reviewing relevant and new scholarship, reviewing interview transcripts, and re-coding certain sections of the transcripts. During this last phase of analysis, I also repeatedly referenced the original research questions that informed this study to ensure alignment with those initial inquiries. These questions were:

a) What are the general perceptions that faculty have of community college FYC students?

b) What are the kinds of interactions that community college FYC faculty and students engage in during the course of their semester?

c) What are faculty perceptions of these interactions?

Though certainly not always in this order, engaging in these activities initiated the process of forming "big-picture" themes that would eventually lead to describing specific conclusions about this study--conclusions that I would eventually frame as findings.

It is worth noting here that after second cycle coding, some concerted effort was made to narrow down the list of codes that had emerged in the first two coding cycles. The narrowing process resulted in four distinct codes--faculty perceptions of past reputation, faculty perceptions of virtue, typology of interactions, liminal nature of interactions. Though other codes had emerged during early coding cycles, I specifically focused on these four codes due to two particular characteristics:

a) their alignment with the literature that informed this study
b) their consistent reference across participants' answers

| From Codes to Themes | |
|---|---|
| Final Secondary Codes | Big Picture Themes |
| Past Reputation<br>● Academic Preparedness<br>● Socio-economic references<br>● Health (mental)<br><br>Virtue<br>● Dispositions/motivations<br>● Behaviors | Faculty perceptions of students' writerly identities |
| Typology of Interactions<br>● Digital<br>● 10-15 min before/after class<br>● In-class<br>● Office hours<br>● College-wide events<br><br>Liminal Nature of Interactions<br>● Location<br>● Purpose<br>● Formality | Interactions as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos |

Table 5

With this narrowing process complete, I turned my efforts to identifying and articulating broad patterns or trends that might arise from or be embedded in the codes. As table 5 demonstrates, one particular big theme that emerged after second cycle coding that closely aligned with the original research questions informing this study related to faculty participants' perceptions of students' writerly identities. Throughout the study, participants were asked to broadly reflect on their perceptions of students. However, throughout the data analysis process, it became apparent that the perceptions referenced by faculty participants specifically related to ethos characteristics such as past reputation

and virtue. Given this insight, ethos-related perceptions became a big-picture theme that I report in chapter 4.

In addition to and related to these ethos-related perceptions discussed by faculty participants is the way that participants referenced certain interactions as a way to discuss their perceptions of students. At times, their references to these interactions focused primarily on their typology within the context of an FYC community college classroom. At other times, those reflections went beyond classification and instead offered insights into the role they seem to play in shaping, changing, and solidifying the ways that participants think about students' writerly identities. These reflections opened the possibility of framing interactions both as sites where participants first form opinions about students' ethos and as spaces where those perceptions are challenged or supported. Reflecting on this possibility, a second big theme of this study that I report in chapter 5 is the productive potential of seeing interactions as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos.

# CHAPTER 4

## FINDINGS: FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS

As stated at the outset, the primary research question that informed the design of this study concerned the perceptions that faculty participants may have of their FYC students. In this chapter, I describe four general areas of students' lives around which faculty perceptions revolve. To do so, it is helpful to look back at the theory of ethos presented in chapter 2 that sought to illuminate the set of factors relevant to perceiving credibility cultivation. For Aristotle, the means (strategies/practices) of cultivating ethos to increase a writer's discursive authority revolve around a three-dimensional view of writerly character that consists of virtues, wisdom, and goodwill. However, as I point out in the literature review, though Aristotle does not explicitly include it, a writer's past reputation seems to also play a large role in ethos construction. Thus, under this 4-dimensional view, credibility cultivation (ethos) involves a writer's ability to engage in practices (historically/traditionally textual) that encourage a reader to perceive that the writer possesses the appropriate kind of character (virtues, wisdom, and goodwill) while accounting for their reputation. Three important points are noteworthy here. First, it is clear that one factor integral to credibility cultivation involves practices in which a writer performs. For Aristotle of course, this performance was largely, if not entirely, evidenced in the text. In addition, another important factor to credibility cultivation relates to the nature of writerly character. In other words, any strategy a writer employs to cultivate ethos must attempt to address or account for the following aspects of character: virtue, wisdom, goodwill, and past reputation.

And finally, an additional noteworthy observation is that this view clearly establishes perception as an important factor in the credibility construction process. Under this Aristotelian view, ethos becomes a process that writers engage in to increase/decrease a writer's ability to shape their audience's writerly perception. In other words, within this premise, rhetors construct a character that is perceived to meet the social, political, and cultural expectations of their audience-- an *ethos* that fits the situation. This relationship between perception and ethos is an important one to note because of this project's particular focus on the factors that influence and shape how faculty (audience) perceive community college students (rhetors) as writers. Thus, in this case, the six faculty participants are representative of the audiences that community college students typically address in their FYC classrooms. And although obtaining student's observations regarding their interactions with faculty was beyond the scope of this project, what faculty participants had to say regarding their perceptions of students (described in this chapter) and subsequently, about the potential ways that those interactions shape their perceptions of students as writers (described in chapter 5), signals a need to pay much closer attention to faculty-student interactions as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos.

Given the important role that an Aristotelian view of ethos ascribes to audience perception, it was important to obtain a general understanding of the perceptions that faculty participants might have of FYC writers upon entering their classroom-- perceptions that the first set of questions in the first interview were designed to elicit. In

this chapter, I use the aforementioned 4-dimensional view of ethos (wisdom, virtue, good will, and past reputation) to present four general areas of faculty perceptions (see table 6 below) reported in this study related ethos. More specifically, as participants reflected on the kinds of challenges community college students face, the most common characteristics of community college students, or what it is like to work with community college students, I discuss how their answers revealed tacit student perceptions closely aligned to *past reputation* and *virtue*--a relationship whose implication I discuss in more detail in chapter 6.

| Faculty Perception Themes | |
|---|---|
| Interview Questions Related to Student Perceptions | Participants' Perceptions Based On... |
| 1. What is it like to work with community college students?<br>2. What are your biggest challenges/affordances as a faculty working with cc students?<br>3. How would you describe the average student at this cc?<br>4. What are the factors in your students' lives you believe have the biggest impact (positively or negatively) on their success as writers in your ENG 101/102 course? | Students' past education<br>Students' mental health<br>Students' socio-economic status<br>Students' dispositions |

Table 6

<u>Perceptions Indexing Students' Past Reputation</u>

Before describing the markers of reputation that participants most referenced, it is worth situating them within Aristotelian notions of past reputation, which he clearly describes in chapter 5 of *The Rhetoric*. Here, Aristotle outlines an array of characteristics

of prior reputation that he asserts audiences/readers tend to respect, including "*fame*," "*health*," "*wealth*", "beauty," "good children," and the like. The reason these traits are important is because they represent, according to Aristotle, sources of happiness for people. And, Aristotle seems to argue, what makes us happy is what we generally admire in others. Thus, speakers who come into the discursive moment with positive reputations that seem to emerge from these traits increase their chances to be believed by their audiences. For the purposes of this study, fame, health, and wealth are emphasized here due to their direct or indirect presence within participants' perceptions of students that this study revealed. For example, to be known for one's *fame* meant, for Aristotle, to be "respected by everybody, or having some *quality* that is desired by all men, or by most (Bizzell and Herzberg, 189)." Though never explicitly referencing education, it is clear that education, certainly a privilege of the upper class, was perceived by ancient audiences as a desirable quality for those interested in speaking at the polis. Thus, it could be argued that well educated rhetors are perceived to be more persuasive than those whose past educational performance is left to be desired or nonexistent. In addition to fame, a rhetor's health was also regarded by Aristotle as an important characteristic of their prior reputation.

Regarding health, Aristotle notes that "The excellence of the body is health; that is, a condition which allows us, while keeping free from disease, to have the use of our bodies…". Like fame, health is perceived as a trait that people generally admire in others. And as a result, according to Aristotle, healthy people are able to cultivate their ethos in ways that unhealthy people cannot. Finally, also germane to this study was participants'

perceptions of students' socioeconomic status, as such perceptions index Aristotle's views of the relationship between rhetor's wealth and their persuasive abilities. For Aristotle, rhetors who took to the pulpit from positions of economic security tend to be believed more than those whose financial status might be uncertain.

Overall, what Aristotle seems to suggest in chapter 5 of the *Rhetoric* is that a rhetor's reputation in relation to their fame, health, and wealth may be considered an important constituent of ethos. If true, it is important to understand the nature of these perceptions; to obtain a better sense of how community college FYC writers are perceived in relation to these characteristics of prior reputation; and ultimately, to discern the potential role that these perceptions may play in shaping how faculty participants view students as writers.

*References to Education*

One area that participants indexed as they discussed their perceptions of students related to students' educational journeys, or more specifically, to their past academic performance. Here, references to high school experiences, grades, and academic preparedness were the most common. For example, when describing the average community college students in his FYC classroom, Elliot noted, "I see a person…[who] probably did all right in high school. Maybe it wasn't an all-star, but they probably got through...And so then the student may not have shined as brightly as others…" Elliot's description introduces to this study what I refer to as an enduring identity marker in his reference to students' past education. In other words, given students' inability to change their previous educational record upon entering the community college classroom, these

perceptions relating to students' educational reputation point to a part of their perceived identity that is abiding. Thus, whether or not their educational record was achieved the previous year or a number years before entering community college, it certainly appears that this reputational marker is one that is enduring and one that faculty participants like Elliot and others in this study seem to ascribe to community college students.

In a similar vein, when reflecting on some of the biggest challenges community college students face, Marissa also references these enduring identities, as she points to the difficulty and sometimes complete inability for students to get past the "academic failure in their (students') minds," which often results in a fixed-mindset regarding their educational identity. Reflecting on those challenges students face, Stuart reflects on the reality that community college students "might not have had some of the luxuries" of a private school education or the confidence that results from "achieving...a 3.0 GPA in high school."

In a slightly more specific fashion, Rose also signals her perceptions regarding students' past academic struggles when she describes some of the literacy challenges she's encountered of students entering her community college FYC classroom. "Maybe it's actually just in Arizona, but coming in, their reading is not what I think [it should be]...their reading could use some work. That's a bit of a challenge." For Rose, her perception of students' past academic struggles is more concretely tied to a tacit enduring identity of them as struggling readers. For Herbert on the other hand, though he also indirectly references their struggles as readers, their difficulty with being "able to see connections between content" is perhaps the most concrete and enduring manifestation of

their prior academic journeys. As Herbert describes it, part of the reason many community college students have struggled academically in the past is their proclivity to compartmentalize the content of each class, which prevents them to see the productive ways that content from different classes can overlap at times; an observation that has the potential to make classes more relevant and meaningful. And it is students' past inability to see the big picture that, according to Herbert, has the potential to negatively influence their performance in the writing classroom.

*References to Mental Health*

Beyond students' past educational performance, study participants also revealed their perceptions related to the health of their students. More specifically, their observations made reference to the mental well-being of those students inhabiting their classrooms. In general, participants, like Sue, worried about the prevalence "of mental health issues" and the troubling fact that as an institution, "we don't necessarily have immediate resources for those students." This sentiment was echoed by other participants, such as Herbert below, who regarded mental well-being as one of the primary obstacles to success facing students entering their FYC classrooms.

> I look at people who have so much potential, and then I look at how complicated their lives are...and I think, I don't know how I'm going to help this person. Like today. I had a student be very honest and very forthright to me and say, "I am in a severe depression. Now I can barely go to bed. I can barely complete my work." And those are some of the things that my degree really doesn't train me for...I can already tell she's a very smart student, very capable good writer, but right away, I

> already realized the challenge is not going to be sentences, paragraphs, research, evidence, any of that stuff. I think this person's going to be able to do that. If she could kind of keep herself emotionally balanced--whether it's medication, whether it's her environment. And those are the things that I'm not really going to be able to use my training for. I feel like I'm very well equipped to teach people in the realm of writing and rhetoric and researching all of that. But the personal issues that students have, I was just not really prepared for that. So that's one of the big challenges.

Once again, Herbert's comments are indicative of a wide-held perception regarding students' mental health. By and large, participants' reflections revealed an authentic concern for the role that mental health would play in the average community college student's chances for success. As Marissa notes, "The biggest challenge is helping students to maintain their motivation when they are dealing with any kind of untreated mental health challenges that stem from other aspects of their lives…" At times, for example, students' inability to cope with these issues resulted in students simply dropping classes without notice. At other times, students did not successfully complete a course due to a high number of missing assignments, which was often a result of their struggle to cope with reported and many times unreported struggles with depression.

*References Socio-economic Status*

Beyond faculty perceptions related to students' past academic performance and mental well-being, a third attribute of prior reputation that their perceptions referenced related to wealth--or socioeconomic status. As Marissa put it, some of the biggest and

most prevalent challenges FYC students face “are related to basic needs or finances.” At times, their success was affected by the multiple jobs students have while taking coursework that all too often leads to a lack of time to focus on assignments. Specifically referring to these kinds of cases, Sue notes, “I can't imagine how many times I've said, look, life is more important than this class at the moment. We have to concentrate on this and dial back.” And while some students are able to push through, the reality for too many of them is that missing assignments rise to a point from which they are unable to recover.

In other cases, it is students’ lack of access to basic resources such as housing, food, and transportation that puts their success in the classroom in jeopardy. As Elliot notes, it can be quite shocking to find out that “Some nutritional needs like basic survival things like a place to live or whatnot” are actually the primary factors related to student success. Given such a sobering reality, Elliot reflected that professors “need to be cognizant of the fact that we can't just assume that somebody has enough to eat; that we can't just assume that somebody has a bed to sleep in because that's not always true.” Unfortunately, despite such awareness and the best of intentions to connect students to the college’s student services, as Stuart describes below, their financial struggles simply lead many students to having to withdraw from courses mid semester.

> I had one particular student, a native American and we tried to get her scholarship. We did...I really worked with her to try to keep her in class. And I believe it was an ENG091 section several semesters ago. It could have been an ALP section when help was still out. But yeah, she lived here with her brother in

> an apartment and her parents were back on the reservation and her brother was at Dobson High. And she kept coming to tell me that she and her brother, [that] he was probably going to have to drop out of Dobson high school and move back to the reservation and help just simply because of economic situations. And she did end up withdrawing [even though] we bent over backwards trying to get her to be able to stay.

Here, Stuart succinctly summarizes a sentiment that almost all faculty participants echoed in the interviews related to students' socioeconomic conditions. That is, for the majority of students who walk into an FYC community college classroom, finances are one of the best predictors of success. And unfortunately, as their perceptions regarding students' financial situation signaled, the burden that such hardships put on their performance in the classroom is all too often impossible to overcome.

Overall, participants' perceptions of students' prior reputation in relation to education, health, and wealth suggest that many community college students enter classrooms with enduring reputational markers that do not lend themselves readily to college writing success. In other words, for these contemporary writers, their perceived prior reputations reflect a kind of common, normalizing ethos that must be overcome. In the case of students' educational reputation, study participants generally described students as academically underprepared and thus, at risk. Regarding their mental health, it was generally perceived by participants that FYC students entering community college may be at risk given that they have a great deal to overcome psychologically just to be able to be successful in their writing classrooms. And finally, their lack of economic

security and access to basic resources such as food and housing makes them extremely vulnerable to withdrawing from FYC courses and/or at risk of dropping out of college altogether.

If, as Aristotle implies, prior reputation regarding education, health, and wealth are constituents of ethos, at best then, these three characteristics reveal a genuine concern in how students' academic success might be negatively affected. At worst, participants' perceptions of these reputational characteristics point to a socially determined, restrictive ethos. Thus, unlike many of their classical counterparts who entered discursive moments with highly respected reputations and positions of power, this study offers new insight and knowledge about the ways that contemporary community college students carry with them labels of deficiency that are more prone to inhibit, rather than facilitate, a writer's ability to construct their ethos.

Perceptions of Students' Dispositions

In addition to prior reputation, faculty perceptions also indexed Aristotelian notions of virtue. For Aristotle, virtue was a state of character intimately concerned with choice and "the proper choice contains moral and/or intellectual virtue that will lead to or reinforce happiness" (Smith 7). Moreover, moral virtue is particularly concerned with motivations (dispositions) and actions that reside along an excess/deficiency continuum. For Aristotle (1160b14-15) then,

> excess and deficiency are a mark of vice, and observance of the mean a mark of virtue: Goodness is simple, badness manifold. Virtue then is a settled disposition

> of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us.

Thus, to demonstrate courage is to possess the appropriate disposition, or right amount, which would, according to Aristotle, lead to making the proper choice in any given situation. However, to display courage in excess would be to appear rash. On the other hand, to display too little courage would appear to be cowardly. For Aristotle, striking the right balance between excess and deficiency relative to a particular kind of virtue, or disposition, leads people to make right choices and as a result, facilitates a rhetor's ability to cultivate ethos. In other words, to adopt and learn to manifest the right proportion of a particular virtue before an audience is precisely what is necessary to cultivate one's ethos. In this study, participants' perceptions of students revealed three student virtues, or dispositions, that participants argued were essential to their success in a writing classroom--confidence, liberality, and hard work. In the following section, I describe how faculty participants perceived these virtues and discuss where along the excess/deficiency continuum faculty situated them in relation to students.

*Confidence*

Perhaps the most prevalent virtue that faculty participants referenced in this study related to students' perceived confidence as they entered their community college FYC courses. Here, confidence referred to students' self-assurance that their writing abilities would facilitate success in the classroom. As faculty participants reflected on the factors in students' lives they believed had the biggest impact (positively or negatively) on their success as writers in ENG 101/102, confidence as a virtue was one of the most

referenced. Overall, participants described students either generally lacking this virtue, or displaying a kind of overconfidence in their abilities--thus situating them on the ends of Aristotle's excess/deficiency continuum (see figure 1).

In Hebert's case for instance, an excess of this virtue seems to be one of the biggest obstacles to student success given students' proclivity to come into class at a "point where they feel like they know a lot already." Here, Herbert is not necessarily denying the wealth of knowledge that students bring into the classroom; a reality he is quick to point out when he states his belief that "a lot of them [students] are more prepared than we [faculty] think they are." Instead, Herbert points out that due to students' long history with English courses in K-12, they are prone to come to a writing classroom feeling overconfident that they might already know all there is to know about writing. Given this excess in confidence, he argues that it is the faculty's job to break "down the things they [students] already know...as well...reframing [that knowledge] in our rhetorical context, the way we'd like to do in English 101 or 102."

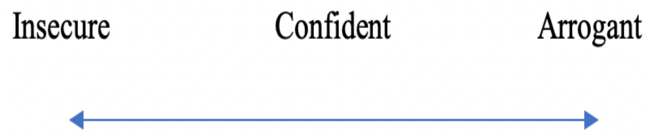


Figure 1

In a similar fashion, Elliot also situates this virtue within the ends of the excess/deficiency continuum. Like Herbert, Elliot also first comments on students' proclivity to behave as if there is very little to learn in an FYC course. Framing such a mindset as "a bit of standoffishness," Elliot also acknowledges the ways such mindset can negatively affect their success in an FYC course. On the other hand, he also notes,

> what I consider to be potentially the greatest challenge of community college courses, in that I think a lot of it is confidence. I think a lot of it is, students show up, and as I mentioned earlier, maybe they weren't the valedictorian at their high school and chances are they weren't...I firmly believe that students are often their harshest critic...I think one of the big factors is that voice in their head...tying very closely into their confidence, that worry, or that anxiety, that they might not be up to snuff for writing...I think that's [lack of confidence] a factor that plays into not only their decision [whether to enroll or not], but how they perform, for lack of a better term, within the course itself.

Here, Elliot describes students' deficiency with respect to confidence as also impeding their success. Indexing their possible subpar academic performance prior to enrolling in community college, he clearly aligns, perhaps more than any other participant, students' insecurity with their success in FYC--an assertion that both Sue and Rose also made when they referenced students' "lack of self-confidence" and "insecurity issues" respectively as factors integral to their success. For Rose, a lack of confidence leads students more often than not to

> give up before they even start the class. They kinda walk into, let's say, my ENG101 class, already thinking that they are not competent writers. And that kind of thinking impacts their effort that they put into their papers. Again, it's like they are already defeated before they are assigned anything in class.

*Liberality*

In addition to confidence, liberality was another virtue that participants reflected on when discussing the factors impacting student success in their FYC classrooms. Here, liberality refers to a person's propensity to be open to new ideas. Thus, to possess the proper amount of liberality (the mean) in a community college setting is to demonstrate a kind of respect for and even acceptance of an array of new beliefs and values that one encounters. As figure 2 demonstrates, being deficient in this virtue implies an attitude of close-mindedness; a stance or position that a person adopts that discourages not only grappling with new ideas, but even considering them. On the other end of the deficiency/excess continuum is the notion of naivete. Here, I refer to a person's uncritical attitude towards new experiences and ideas; an inability to critically discriminate against their distinguishing characteristics.

Close-minded Liberality Naivete

Figure 2

For the most part, participants situated students' proclivity towards liberality along the deficiency/excess ends of the continuum, with one exception. When describing the average community college student, Herbert pointed to their willingness to be open-minded in the transitory nature of their college relationships.

> They are really resourceful, like you see that they exchange numbers with each other, in class letting you [faculty] know that somebody is coming late...Even

> though they realize they're just temporary communities. Like, I don't think they're looking to form anything for the long term. It's like, 'Hey, it's English, 101 we're at the same table.' Or, 'we get here at the same time in the morning' or 'we're both smoking over here in the corner. Let's form something.' After the semester is over...it's just fragments. And they form a new part of community at the new place they go. But they're really open to having superficial bonds because they realize that those are what they're going to need. And the students who are more alone and less willing to even have those superficial relationships, they're the ones who I see struggling the most because when they miss something, there's nobody to kind of grasp onto.

Here, Herbert seems to be describing the results when students are able to possess and demonstrate the appropriate amount of liberality. Their open-mindedness is perceived as a resource integral to their success in the classroom. Their openness to new experiences that are gained through new relationships is regarded as a very virtuous and practical approach to handling the plethora of unforeseen emergencies that often occur in a typical semester.

On the other hand, if Herbert's reflection pointed to an appropriate display of liberality, reflections such as Marissa's signaled a certain kind of close-mindedness. More specifically, in her attempt to describe the average community college student, she pointed to students' proclivity to treat classes like FYC with a sort of "just give me my grades so I can get into the nursing program" attitude--adding that she prefers when

students approach the class with a bit more of an open mind about what they might be exposed to in the class. Similarly, Elliot also describes this close-mindedness as a particular challenge facing community college students, reflecting on their propensity to approach the course as a "thing that you just gotta check off, just get through…[as] the academic equivalent of a root canal...just gotta hang onto something and just get through it." Like Marissa, Elliot hopes that students would walk into the FYC classroom a bit more open-minded about what they anticipate their experience is going to be like. And finally, for Rose, she hopes that her class will result in students being much more open-minded about writing and less focused on its rigidity--a perception they often bring to the course. According to Rose, their close-mindedness to new ways of thinking about writing is a significant obstacle to their success.

On the excess end of the open-minded continuum is being overly uncritical or naive about new ideas and experiences with which one engages. Here, the issue is not being close-minded; it is more about lacking the experience to be able to discern or make sound judgments specifically when it comes to questions about their educational journey. In many ways, most of the participants who referenced students' naivete pointed to the overwhelming number of students at the community college who were first-generation college students. Specifically pointing to this lack of familiarity with the "culture of the academy," Marissa for instance refers to the implications of their first-generation reality,

> I really do appreciate when students self-advocate; when they take advantage of all the resources...it's knowing how to play the game, knowing how work, you

> know, in the college community. And the challenge is when you have students who don't know those conventions, don't know those rules or what that culture of the community is.

In light of the inexperience with how college works, many students simply ‘do not know what they do not know.’ Thus, they have a difficult time making informed judgments regarding the best ways to proceed along their academic journeys. And for Herbert, this leads him to sometimes feeling like “a killer of dreams for some students” when they walk into his classroom with overly naive expectations of what it might mean to earn a degree. As a result, Herbert notes, “I feel like a challenge is trying to help students realize the pipeline might be a little longer than they thought it was.” At times, this means letting them know that it will take a lot longer than two years to earn their associates degree if they are only taking two-three classes per semester. At other times, it means helping understand the long process of applying and getting through a graduate degree.

*Hardworking*

The last virtue that participants in this study revealed through their reflections relates to a student’s hardworking disposition. By hardworking, I refer here to a student’s proclivity to be diligent and industrious in order to be successful in college. At times, this disposition was discussed within the context of students’ personal and professional lives. At other times, it was in reference to their academic efforts that participants indexed this virtue. And, as was the case with the previous two virtues, participants’ discussion related to hardworking fell along the excess-deficiency continuum previously discussed. As

figure 3 demonstrates, to be deficient in this disposition is to be lazy; to give off the impression as a student that beyond attending class, nothing else is actually being accomplished. To display such a disposition in excess means to be overextended. For students, this usually refers to their attentiveness to the plethora of personal and professional responsibilities that they engage in while attending school.

Indexing students' extra responsibilities, Rose states, "So I try to be as accommodating as possible to those things," such as jobs and children to care for. According to Rose, these accommodations are necessary to alleviate the abnormally busy schedule that community college students often juggle while attending classes. Similarly, Sue urges the need for faculty to make themselves available to them given that "so many of them are balancing so much in their lives...They just have a lot more on their plate. I think we see more students proportionally that have families to take care of and multiple jobs" as well as students who "get off the graveyard shift and come to class." And as she describes the average community college student, Marissa also references the many "outside, whether it be jobs or family" responsibilities that students who enter her writing classroom have.

Figure 3

Though not explicitly using "hardworking" as a way to describe these students, their reflections certainly situate hardworking, as a disposition that students demonstrate,

within the excess/deficiency continuum. At times, their appreciation and acknowledgement for the hard work that community college students demonstrate suggests that students are displaying such disposition in appropriate proportion, or in the mean. Such an appropriate display of this virtue could be one of the reasons that these faculty participants are so willing to make the necessary accommodations to help students succeed in the classroom. In addition, their dedication and investment in acquiring their degree, which are often evidenced by their hardworking disposition, was more often than not the reason why faculty participants enjoyed working with community college students. At other times, however, participants' reflections position students' manifestation of this virtue at the excess end of the continuum. Here, the fact that students have to work so hard, or are so overextended, is concerning for many faculty; a concern that is evidenced by the fact that the majority of faculty participants referenced students' multiple responsibilities in and out of the classroom as a major challenge to their college success. For Sue, it simply was "an eye-opening experience" to realize just how hard her students had to work just to turn in their work on time; especially those "single mothers, raising kids, working 40 hours a week at" this institution.

On the deficiency end of this continuum is the perception related to a student's proclivity to be lazy; to display a disposition that signals an unwillingness to do any work. In many ways, the perception of a student's laziness was the result of their seemingly lack of motivation as evidenced in their interactions with faculty in the classroom--a perception specifically fueled when students fail to turn in work or by their shaky attendance record. At other times, such a perception stems from their classroom

demeanor--one where students appear to be disinterested or unmotivated to do any work in the classroom. Regardless of where this perception comes from, as Herbert acknowledges, it is an unfortunate perception that is present in an FYC classroom that results from only seeing

> students in a kind of fragmented way. We only see them through the lens of the English class we're teaching and the math teacher will only see them with a math lens and a reading teacher only for that reading class…

And unfortunately, according to Herbert, such a way of seeing our students prevents us from understanding a much different reality about who they are, which is “really hard workers.” Without this broader perspective and what they are doing in their other courses and in their lives at large, their behavior and demeanor in the classroom leads many faculty to see students as lazy; as individuals who are not willing to put in the hard work to succeed.

Together, these references to Aristotelian examples of virtue reinforce the role that faculty perceptions play in how they perceive students’ efforts to cultivate their ethos. In other words, it appears that perceptions related to confidence, liberality, and hard work may act as integral mediating factors that tacitly shape their opinion of students’ writerly selves. In this study, participants clearly privileged confidence, open-mindedness, and hard work as desirable attributes for student writers to possess or manifest. In many cases, these characteristics were directly linked to success in a community college writing classroom. What is interesting, however, is that simply

attaining these characteristics was not enough. As the discussion above suggests, students must manifest these dispositions in appropriate ways that lie between an excess-deficient continuum. If the mean is not properly attained, some students are perceived as insecure, close-minded, and lazy, while others may be seen as arrogant, exceedingly naive, and completely overextended. Wherever students' manifestations of these dispositions may be situated along this continuum, it is clear that these three virtues shape how faculty participants perceive students. And given, as Aristotle seems to suggest, that virtue (along with past reputation) is one element of how writerly character is formed, understanding how faculty participants think about and ultimately situate these dispositions within such a continuum opens up more concretely the potential ways that faculty perception of these virtues and ethos are related.

Ultimately, the discussion in this chapter suggests that past reputation and virtue are two Aristotelian factors that must be accounted for in community college FYC settings. More importantly, reflecting collectively on the ways in which participants discussed these factors in relation to students, it is clear that their perceptions regarding these ethotic characteristics in students may play a role in how faculty perceive students' ethos. Regarding past reputation, references that participants made to students' past educational performance, mental health, and socioeconomic status reveal that students are ascribed identity markers that do not lend themselves readily to written communication. Together, these reputational references suggest that community college FYC students enter writing classrooms with markers of credibility which, rather than helping to construct a writerly ethos, appear to function more as obstacles to overcome. In regards to

virtue, it certainly appears that whether or not students are aware, how faculty perceive students' ethos is shaped by how certain dispositions are enacted. Faculty participants' reflections, for example, on hard work suggests the ways that its proper manifestation in a student's life can positively influence the ways they are perceived by faculty. However, as I discussed in the second part of this chapter, manifesting the mean, or right amount of virtue, is more difficult than may appear on the surface. As Craig Smith notes, Aristotelian notions of virtue are more like moving targets than ideals.

> That is, speakers [writers] must understand that one audience's notion of courage might be another audience's notion of rashness. Effective speakers [writers] must either adapt to the audience's conception of courage or persuade the audience to move along the virtue's continuum until its notion of courage aligns with that of the speaker [writer].

Traditional pathways for perceiving student ethos have historically been reduced to the writerly moves found in a text. However, the findings from this chapter suggest that faculty perceptions of students' writerly identities may be shaped and influenced by a perception formation process that begins long before students enter an FYC classroom. As faculty and students engage in the kinds of interactions I describe in the following chapter, it appears that faculty perceptions of students build off each prior perception, resulting in changes related to students' past reputational and dispositional markers. Here, perception formation is not a one-off occurrence, but rather, a continuous and sociohistorically threaded phenomenon facilitated by the interactions between students

and faculty. More specifically, what faculty participants said and signaled in relation to these interactions is that they may potentially represent alternative pathways for perceiving ethos–pathways that shape not simply how faculty perceive students in general, but more importantly, how faculty perceive students' writerly selves.

# CHAPTER 5

# INTERACTIONS AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS

In relation to this study's primary research question concerning faculty perceptions, in the previous chapter, I described four broad categories around which faculty perceptions of community college FYC students revolved. When filtered through an Aristotelian view of ethos, I demonstrated the ways that these categories seemed to be most closely related to past reputation and virtue–two ethotic characteristics. Altogether, the findings described in chapter four suggest that community college students enter FYC classrooms with ascribed identities that are not always conducive to establishing or employing a writerly ethos.

In this chapter, I report on findings related to a secondary research question that emerged out of the aforementioned focus on faculty perceptions–namely, faculty-student interactions. Thus, as faculty participants reflected on questions that aimed to elicit their perceptions of community college students, they repeatedly referenced their interactions with students in ways that brought notions of perceptions and interactions in productive conversation. More specifically, my aim in this chapter is to broadly describe the role that faculty-student interactions seem to play in shaping and revising faculty perceptions.

## Domains of Interactions

In order to describe the potential role that interactions play in shaping faculty perceptions, the first goal of this chapter is to obtain a better understanding of the nature of interactions between faculty participants and students. Here, I was looking, at the very least, to classify, name, or categorize the kinds of interactions reported by participants. It

was with this aim in mind that participants were asked to respond to the interview questions below (see Table 7 below). In this initial section of this chapter, I describe five domains of interactions reported by participants in this study.

| Interview Questions That Elicited Domains of Interactions |
|---|
| <u>1st Interview</u><br><br>1. During a typical f2f course, what kinds of interactions do you have with students in or outside of class?<br>2. How do these interactions impact your perception of them as students?<br>3. Do any of the interactions you have had with students ever come to mind when evaluating/responding to their writing |
| <u>2nd Interview</u><br>1. In the previous interview, the following interactions with students were the most prevalent discussed by participants: 10-15 minutes before class starts/right after class; Office hours; Digital (email, LMS announcements, etc.); Class time; Outside of class events (poetry readings, etc.) Can you discuss how each of these interactions might help to change or solidify your initial perception of students?<br>2. As you think back to the evaluations of student papers from this semester or previous semesters, do any of the above-mentioned interactions ever come to mind when you are in the midst of reading their final drafts?<br>3. You have just finished reading and making comments on a students' final draft. You are going back and forth between giving them a grade that has a range of 2-3% percentage points (i.e., 82% - 85%). To what extent, if any, do the interactions you have had with that student inform one way or another the grade that you end up giving that student. Can you elaborate on your thought process?<br>4. Given the emphasis on the relationship between faculty-student perceptions and interactions, what impact, if any, do you think COVID has played (and will continue to play) in the dynamic between these two factors? |

Table 7

*Before/After Class Interactions*

One domain most often reported by participants revolves around those ten to fifteen minutes before and/or after class when faculty and students interact. At times, these interactions occurred in hallways just outside of a classroom as students and faculty waited for the classroom to be cleared from the preceding class. At other times, the

interactions that took place in those ten to fifteen minutes occurred in the classroom as faculty and students waited for class to officially begin. One participant in this study, Herbert, described the nature of this interaction in the following way.

> So I try to get to class about 10 minutes early just for this rapport building. So I'll just have random conversations for the first, like 10 minutes for people coming with whoever's there talking about life, talking about all sorts of things. Usually we don't get to any, any class stuff...I just like to get in there and talk to students and kind of figure out what they're doing and what their lives are.

Similarly, Sue, another participant, described these interactions as,

> Yeah. Oh, those are some of the best, right? Because it's amazing how quickly you get to know each other and somebody reading something, or someone's talking about a series they're watching and then connecting the dots.

In both cases, these interactions served as ways for faculty to get to know students, especially at the beginning of a semester. In many ways, faculty reported gaining a much better understanding of students' complex personal, academic, and workplace lives. Furthermore, as three other participants, Marissa, Stuart and Elliot, noted, this space to get to know students better afforded them an opportunity to feel a better sense of connection with students. As Marissa put it when referring to the impact that the pandemic has had,

> that's why, I'll be honest, that's why I'm not as much liking this [COVID pandemic], what we're going through right now, because I really miss the

> personal connections because some of my students will show up a few minutes early and we have really great conversations about life before we get into the into the content of the course. And they really appreciate that connection.

Time and time again, the participants of this study regarded these informal interactions right before and/or after class, where the conversation often vacillated from the personal to the academic, as important spaces where those aforementioned perceptions discussed in the previous chapter were first reinforced or challenged. As I discuss later in this chapter, at times, those 10-15 minutes interactions before or after class led faculty to see past those seemingly static identity markers related to students' past reputations. And still in other instances, it also appears that as a result of meeting with and speaking with students before or after class, faculty participants' perceptions of students' dispositions were more informed, nuanced, and tempered.

*Office Hours Interactions*

A second domain prevalent in participants' interview reflections described the interactions that took place during traditional office hours. Like those ten-fifteen minutes before/after class, the topics of conversation and the purpose of the interaction fluctuated from the personal to the academic. Thus, in many instances, these conversations revealed the affective factors related to students' lives that affect their academic performances--factors that included but were not limited to students' use of time, family involvement, and personal expectations. For Marissa, office hours present an opportunity for her to talk about,

> what's going on in their broader context, like their classes, their family life, and I don't ask, I just say [ask] how many other classes are you taking or something, you know, I do try, but then they will broach, you know, they'll be like, yeah, I also work over at, Dutch Brothers.... so yeah, the office hours that are mandated basically are really great ways of getting to know my students and developing a relationship.

For Herbert, office hours are spaces where he can address some of the affective factors that might impact students' academic performance. Acknowledging the fact that many students come into the office with an array of emotional and mental health concerns, he sees this time as "about bringing levity in the conversation." Thus, though he has had many students who come in "really, really angry about something," office hours afford him the opportunity to diffuse and address some of those affective concerns to help them get on track. It is this same blend, of personal and academic, that Rose describes below:

> They come to me [during office hours] with all sorts of questions, which I feel pretty cool about, like they'll come to me if they have a concern about something...like in another subject area, the way a teacher spoke to them or the class, or they'll come to me with questions about what classes to take or what they want to do with their lives.

Office hours then, like the time before and/or after class, reflect domains where the personal and academic blend; where formality and informality vacillate. At times, these interactions are specific to the written discursive texts students produce. However, as participants' reflections suggest, more often than not these interactions end up

focusing on a variety of complex factors affecting students' lives. The result, in both cases, is that faculty get to know students better and build stronger connections--or, as Herbert noted, they learn "so much more about them as people when they come to my office hours...about how busy they are, but how hard of workers they are and how their interests are really shaped and focus on very particular things." And, the ability for faculty to learn more about students through these interactions affords these faculty participants a subsequent opportunity to once again reassess their perceptions of their FYC students--perceptions that echo those dispositional and reputational markers discussed in the previous chapter.

*Class-Time Interactions*

A third domain of interactions that participants reported related to class time. On the one hand, this was to be expected, as class time is by far the most consistent space where faculty and students interact. However, though participants did reference lecture and whole class discussion in relation to their class time interactions, their answers also revealed other, more subtle interactions that are specifically germane to this study. Of note here were the one-on-one conversations that some participants reported as occurring during small group discussions/activities. Here, while students work in small groups, Herbert discussed his proclivity to use this time, as he walked from group to group, to engage with particular students.

> If I circulate to the small groups around the classroom, I want to have those small moments where I kind of connect that to the emails we've had, the individual emails I've had with certain students or conversations that I've had with them in

> previous classes or a homework assignment they've posted or a paper they're working on.

For Herbert, these unplanned, unscripted, “just in time” interactions with students represent a space to triangulate different student data points in order to most effectively help that student. Similarly, Elliot uses some of these impromptu one-on-one class time discussions to make students feel more at ease in the classroom.

> And so when I go over to walk to somebody and chat with them, I always make it a point to kneel so that I'm looking up at them while they're conversing,..It's these little interactions, it's the quick conversations. It's all of these interactions...I'm just, frankly, I'm just trying to win them over. I'm just trying to win them over, because if I can, then I am convinced that everything else will sort itself out.

And for Marissa, while these one-on-one interactions that take place around small group collaborations are “typically more focused on the academic issues,” she also admits that as she walks from group to group, these one-on-one conversations often will “go into personal realms there too.” Thus, while a personal-academic nature is also accounted for in this domain, Marissa’s comments point to a different kind of dynamic. More specifically, her comments index a kind of splitting of the personal and academic; a dynamic between the personal and academic that is less fluid than in the first two domains.

En masse, similar to the reported interactions in the previous two domains, these class time interactions varied in their purpose and in the ways they vacillated between the

personal and academic. While often operating within a formal classroom setting that is in stark contrast to the informal contexts of the previous two domains, these private conversations often shifted abruptly into informal sidebar conversations whose residual impact, as I discuss later in chapter 6, went far beyond “breaking the ice” or better connecting with students.

*Digital Interactions*

Another domain of interactions was digital in nature. Perhaps more than any other, the interactions reported by participants in this domain varied widely. In some instances, the digital interactions discussed took place within the learning management system such as course announcements. At other times, participants pointed to the digital feedback inserted in student drafts. And still in other cases, emails represented the digital interaction upon which participants from this study reflected. Specifically referencing emails, Rose commented that she interacts with students individually through email, “Either if I'm concerned about something, like if I'm concerned about them being behind, I will reach out to them to a certain point or if they're not coming to class I will reach out through email.” Similar to those interactions taking place 10-15 minutes before/after class and during office hours, for Marissa and Stuart, interacting through email presented an additional space for personal connection; a space for staying in touch as well as a space where faculty can demonstrate empathy in light of the myriad of affective factors that students face. For Herbert, email interactions provide an opportunity for him to specifically comment on student work. These email interactions, beyond sites for deeper personal connections to students, also served a pedagogical purpose to follow up, as the

excerpt below demonstrates, on previously given feedback on drafts. Reflecting on an email he wrote to a student regarding a draft on mobile mental health services, Herbert notes,

> And in the discussions with her on email, I was like, okay, so you see in these things you're writing about it...It's a little bit about the legal stuff, but it's also about that internal discussion within the profession about where they think it's valid. Talking about live online? How viable is it? What is this? What is the constraint? How does it help? How do we get around HIPAA? How do we deal with this? It's good because it gets to suit to people right away when they need us the most, but it's bad because it allows them to drop out quicker without us knowing where they've gone and being able to contact them. So really as I'm commenting on her work, I'm reminding her of those email things where it's, Hey, remember, you've got this really rich, positive of content you can go to, keep looking at that because your paper is talking all about that, but really getting to it, that it's about not just the patient and having access, but about the profession and how much they buy into that form of communication.

Once again, as observed with previous domains, the interactions discussed in this domain were neither wholly academic nor wholly personal in terms of their subject matter and pedagogical purpose. Though Herbert's excerpt above exemplifies the academic nature of his digital interactions with students, the reflections by other participants demonstrate that this domain serves other purposes as well. Namely, the

digital domain seems to be a site where faculty learn more about the array of factors in students' lives that potentially influence their success in the writing classroom. It appears to be a site of interaction where faculty, as a result of better understanding the complex lives of students, make concessions related to student writing--concessions that, as I discuss in chapter five, shape how the credibility of that work is perceived and ultimately assessed.

*College-Wide Events*

The fifth and final domain related specifically to those interactions that took place around the college at large. Thus, while the first four domains implied a certain level of class involvement and/or classwork, the interactions in this last domain do not appear to require as much. Sue, for instance, reflected on how much she enjoys interacting with students at events on campus such as poetry readings. At these readings, Sue informally meets with students "as follow ups or because they want to talk about something from class a little bit more…" Additionally, Sue also organizes outside of class study sessions, which are completely voluntary, where students feel comfortable enough that "somebody brings a dog and somebody's got a baby." For Stuart, these outside of class interactions promote a stronger connection with students. More specifically, he notes that,

> The relationship. I mean, the discussion, you know, it's not about your class grades home, you know, it's, it's just kind of about life and you really make a strong connection and they'll see you next day in class and they say, Oh, it's kind of cool seeing you outside of class, you know?

Similarly, for Marissa, the connections that Stuart indexes above occur most strongly when she interacts with students at service-learning events. It is during these interactions where she forges some of the strongest relationships with students--relationships where "usually those students stayed in touch with me for multiple semesters after and asked for letters of recommendation."

In all, the five domains described above encompass and signal a landscape or typology of interactions that the participants in this study reported. And, as stated earlier, this typology was a result of a first-cycle coding process. During this initial coding phase then, the emphasis was twofold. First, the aim was to identify distinctly separate domains of interactions between faculty and students. Second, the purpose was to obtain a sense of what was going on in each domain in order to elucidate general activities and practices that participants tend to engage in within each site respectively.

Subsequently to this coding phase, a second round of coding and data analysis was performed. Here, the aim was to articulate general characteristic(s), or trends, across the five domains of interactions that might enable me to describe more concretely how these interactions might impact or shape how faculty perceive students' ethos. The findings from this second data analysis phase, which I discuss below, resulted in identifying a liminal nature within those interactions–a characteristic that seem to explain how these interactions trigger, facilitate, and sustain a perception formation process that ultimately results in influencing, shaping, and revising how faculty perceive students' writerly identities.

Liminal Nature of Interactions

Collectively analyzing how participants described their interactions with students, the predominant characteristic that materialized had to do with their liminal nature. Here, I use the term liminal to signal the proclivity for certain aspects of interactions between faculty and students to occur in an "in-between" or transitory fashion. Thus, though upon first glance it did appear that the interactions referenced by participants were more static in nature, overall, their liminality materialized in a number of ways.

*Locational Liminality*

First, the more participants described their interactions, the more their locational liminality became apparent. For instance, though the classroom was the space that participants most commonly associated with those 10-15 minutes before/after class, those interactions began in hallways just outside of a classroom. As Elliot notes,

> It was my habit and always my intention to try and get to class 10 minutes early, not necessarily because, and I know that sometimes it's logistical, right. You're just getting there as another professor is clearing out. I don't want to try and force my way into a room, but I like being there early enough, not just to get set up, that usually takes, you know, 60 to 90 seconds. I like the opportunity to create that weird little space in which we're in class, but class hasn't quite officially started because I find that that's in the moments when students are most willing to be, for lack of a better term, maybe their more authentic self...

Here, Elliot describes the hallway-classroom transition previously referenced. Though certainly there are informal interactions taking place in hallways, many of those continue and extend into the classroom--where, at least for those 10-15 minutes before class actually begins, faculty can continue to create that "weird little space" for more authentic connections with students.

This same locational liminality can also be seen in those digital spaces. For instance, one of the most widely discussed digital interactions, outside of email, revolved around faculty leaving comments on student drafts. More often than not, these comments, situated on the margins of student drafts, marked the beginning of a back-and-forth digital interaction between faculty and students. However, though the back-and-forth interaction began in this space, it often extended into email. Similar to the hallway-classroom transition, the interactions specifically about student papers extended, or continued, beyond the digital margins of their draft into the digital space of email. Specifically reflecting on this transition between digital spaces, Herbert notes,

> So really as I'm commenting on her work, I'm reminding her of those email things where it's, 'Hey, remember, you've got this really rich, positive content you can go to. Keep looking at that…' So with her, I've been doing a lot of back and forth, specifically referring back to my comments on the papers in canvas and the email interactions we've had. [In those email interactions] I still refer back to the assignments, like, 'remember that comment I had on your assignment, here's how that relates to this thing here.'

For Herbert, emails and digital student drafts represented liminal locations where interactions with students might be initiated in one space and be continued in a different space. Such transitory nature is worth noting as it gives pause to any attempts at framing the locational nature of interactions as a physical-digital binary. Instead, it appears that the spaces where these reported interactions take place are much more fluid and dynamic than one might have expected.

*Liminality of Purpose*

Beyond their location, another aspect of interactions where their liminal nature is evident had to do with their telos, or purpose of the interaction. Here, I am specifically referring to the reasons faculty participants provided for engaging in each respective interaction. In general, participants described this purpose along a continuum of building personal connections with students and responding to their academic needs. Regarding the former end of this continuum, participants in this study stated that some of their interactions with students were intended to build rapport in the classroom, increase connections with students, and/or gain an overall better understanding of students. Regarding those 10-15 minutes interactions before class, Elliot notes, “I'm just, frankly, I'm just trying to win them over...because if I can, then I am convinced that everything else will sort itself out.” For Elliot, these 10-15 minutes present an opportunity to create the most conducive environment for teaching and learning. The rapport that he hopes to build with students during this time is facilitated by the informal, personal topics that he is willing to discuss that might resonate with students. In a similar fashion, Herbert tries

> to get to class about 10 minutes early just for this rapport building. So I'll just have random conversations for the first, like 10 minutes for people coming with whoever's there talking about life, talking about all sorts of things.

Beyond rapport-building, getting to know students on a deeper level was also a way for faculty to build personal connections. Faculty in this study reported a desire to find as many opportunities to simply know more about students' lives; a desire that was especially important due to community college students' complicated lives. Here once again, Elliot's reflection reflects this purpose very well.

> And so what I find myself doing is I take very small data sets, and then I kind of extrapolate, right, because I've talked to the student this number of times for this couple of ends. So I have data like this, but I try and broaden it because I'm never going to be able to spend enough time. What that means is because I'm a human being I'm flawed and I'm prone to assumptions that might not hold true. And so what I found fairly regularly is the construction of who I think that student is usually takes, you know, one comment or one paper or one something to, you know, take that construct and tear it all down because I was clearly wrong...which is why I I'm constantly trying to find ways to interact within the classroom and even outside of it, because I know for a fact that I'm probably getting things wrong and the more I keep using the word data, and that sounds really artificial...

For Elliot, purposefully connecting with students on a personal level presented an opportunity to tear down constructs, or impressions, that might not accurately represent a

student. By engaging in interactions that were beyond academic in nature, he was able to broaden his data set enough so as to obtain a much more authentic perception of students. Similarly, Sue reflected that those personal interactions "help the comfort level of the students, so that can humanize them in a way beyond what I'm just seeing of a one-dimensional student, you know?" Like Elliot, Sue also purposefully engages in some interactions to broaden her perception of students, knowing full well that such interactions provide her insight into the complex conditions under which many of them attend school.

On the other side of this continuum resides the more traditional rationale for faculty-student interactions--namely, academic. Here, faculty participants reported that their interactions with students were intended to clarify course material, answer specific questions regarding drafts, make connections between course content, and check-in on students. Whether it was class time interactions that occurred in small groups, emails, or after class conversations, it was clear that participants intentionally interacted with students for the specific purpose of addressing academic questions and concerns. As Marissa notes,

> during class it's typically more focused on the academic issues...it's a lot of group collaboration as I'm wandering around, checking on groups and offering suggestions or asking questions. And sometimes when they're done, they'll go into personal realms there too. And then of course there's after class clarification and other discussions about...maybe upcoming classes that they are going to miss or

> that they have concerns about...Emails are generally more responsive in nature to questions, but it also can be if students are not in class and I haven't seen them.

Here, the academic nature of her interactions with students is clear. Though class time might be considered the main site where these take place, her reflection illustrates other domains where such interactions also occur. One of these domains, for Rose, is office hours. In describing the purpose of office hours, Rose stated,

> They come to me with all sorts of questions, which I feel pretty cool about. Like they'll come to me if they have a concern about something, like in another subject area, the way a teacher spoke to them or the class. Or they'll come to me with questions about what classes to take or what they want to do with their lives...which I always feel really moved by those questions for some reason. They will come with questions about their assignments, we do conferencing as well. So I work with them one-on-one as needed. And then in addition, I'll conference with them and some of them seem to really flourish in that.

Once again, similar to Marissa's reflections, we see evidence of the academic purpose behind some of Rose's interactions with her students. Whether these serve to clarify questions regarding current course material or even future academic endeavors, there is a clear distinction in purpose from those earlier aforementioned interactions that were more personal in nature.

In many ways, the desire to meet students' academic needs behind these interactions was to be expected, as it reflected my own anecdotal experience teaching

FYC. However, it is also worth noting that my reference to a continuum of building personal connections with students and responding to their academic needs points to the observation that the purpose behind these interactions is also not a static phenomenon. In other words, though participants such as Marissa and Rose both engaged in interactions with students that they intended to be for academic purposes, their answers index the possibility for these interactions to shift in purpose and address more personal concerns. For example, as Marissa intentionally interacts with students by walking around the classroom during small group activities, she reports that at times, those side conversations she ends up having with students will "go into personal realms there too." Likewise, Rose's description of her office hours interactions with students evidences this academic-personal shift, as she describes her students' proclivity to want to discuss their future lives beyond their FYC experience. The liminality of purpose, where interactions shift back and forth between personal and academic concerns, is an important insight of this study because it elucidates just how dynamic interactions can be. While on the surface certain interactions such as those that occur in office hours may appear to serve a very singular academic purpose, this study suggests that a lot more may be happening in those sites. In many ways, those formal sites become informal spaces where faculty establish deep personal connections with students. Additionally, as those interactions shift to personal matters, they provide faculty with a much broader and nuanced understanding of students that, at least for this study's participants, informs their perceptions of those students.

*Liminality in Formality*

A third characteristic about interactions that point to their liminal nature relates to notions of formality. Here, I refer to the extent that the interactions reported in this study maintained or complied with an expected set of behavioral conventions or pre-established procedures. Broadly speaking, participants in this study reflected a proclivity towards the informal. In other words, while certain interactions such as those occurring during class time, office hours, or email would initially position faculty and students in roles (teacher/student, mentor/mentee, expert/novice, etc.) that called for a pre-established way of behaving and speaking, participants' answers revealed that more often than not, those norms tended to loosen or disappear altogether throughout the course of interactions– pointing once again to their transitory nature. In Stuart's case for example, though he is aware of the role of authority that he has during those formal class time interactions, he is also aware of the need to "kind of go between that fine line of" talking about "my wife, my pets, with them, things like that" and more formal, school-related topics. In other words, although Stuart understands the norms that inform the accepted topics of conversation during class interactions, he is willing to break those norms in order for students to be able to think, "Hey, this person, this teacher is a human, you know… [a] person I can talk to on a level."

In a similar fashion, Sue is also open to loosening those conventions as she notes that while she tries to stay focused on keeping things formal during those office hours conversations, she also goes "go unscripted whenever we need, you know, so sometimes

we need to just have these conversations about things." For Sue, it is actually preferable to shift from those formal ways of talking about school, grades, and drafts into more informal topics such as family, what they are reading, or about

> about a series they're watching...One of my most favorite terms in the world came from one of those conversations where years ago it was before the end of the spring semester. And one of my students who was married with kids, we were talking [during office hours] and I said, 'will you be traveling this summer? Are you going on vacation?' And she said, 'well, we're going to visit family. So we're going on visitation?' Mike [her spouse] and I've used that term for years, you know, like, that's fantastic. You know, so yes, I love those tidbits...

Beyond the formal/informal transitory nature of topics that participants discuss with students, some also reported that they attempted to make those interactions a bit more informal by encouraging students to refer to them in a less formal fashion. For Elliot, he tells them in the very first class of the semester to refer to him in whatever manner they might be comfortable with.

> And so if the student teacher relationship is such that it's gotta be mr. Professor x, then so be it. But I also tell them, like, my name is Elliot, and I don't know, like, that name has always sufficed. Why should it not suffice here? And so when I'm emailing them and I sign off, it's always Elliot with a lowercase e...

Elliot's response evidences an intentional choice to make less formal an interaction that is otherwise governed by a set of expected norms in the way that students are supposed to

refer to faculty. This proclivity towards the informal also shows up in his behavior with students during those one-on-one class interactions. As Elliot notes,

> By nature of the class, I'm at the front of it, they're sitting down. And so I'm always a couple of feet taller than them. And so when I go over to walk to somebody and chat with them, I always make it a point to kneel so that I'm looking up at them while they're conversing.

In kneeling while conversing with students during class, Elliot intentionally breaks from the more formal and expected behavioral conventions that would otherwise govern those kinds of in-class interactions. Elliot's comments, like Sue's, demonstrate not just how easily interactions between faculty and students turn from formal to informal, but also that these shifts are not arbitrary in nature. Instead, these shifts seem to reflect a proclivity by certain participants in this study to interact with students more informally related to ways of speaking and ways of being.

The liminal nature of the interactions between faculty and students is an important insight from this study because it begins to explain, in part, why the aforementioned perception formation process is so impactful in changing faculty perceptions of students. In particular, the transitory nature in location, purpose, and formality facilitates a kind of *rhetorical bleeding* that has an accumulated effect on faculty perception. In other words, it appears that as the faculty's interactions with students transitioned from hallways to classrooms, from physical locations to digital ones, from informal to formal, and from academic to personal, the influence it has on faculty perceptions "bleeds," or

accumulates. I conclude this chapter, then, by illustrating this process at work. More specifically, I describe a nascent mechanism that explains how interactions between faculty and students shape how faculty perceive students' past reputation, dispositions, and linguistic performances.

Interactions and Ethos Perception

Recall that in chapter 2 of this study, I offered an etymological history of ethos to introduce the notion of “dwelling” as an ethotic practice. Such a move opened the potential of framing ethos perception as a dwelling process--one where both writer and audience interact to negotiate outside of the written text whose ideas, values, dispositions, customs, and conventions will be privileged when the textual moment occurs. Overall, it appears that due in part to their liminality, the interactions described in this chapter afforded faculty participants to obtain a better and more in-depth understanding of their students. More specifically, filtering these interactions through an ethotic lens allows us to more acutely discern one particular aspect of those student perceptions that is being shaped when faculty and students interact–namely, students’ writerly selves. At times, faculty-student interactions help faculty see past the static reputational identities typically ascribed to students. At other times, interview data suggests that their interactions with students also help to radically shift how faculty perceive certain student virtues often manifested through student behaviors. And still in other instances, findings from this study suggest that interactions between faculty and students may also inform how faculty perceive students’ linguistic performances as manifested through the texts they create in FYC community college classes.

*Interactions and Prior Reputation*

In general, it appears that the most prevalent way that faculty-student interactions shape faculty perceptions is through a deeper and more nuanced understanding of students that is facilitated by the rhetorical bleeding that occurs across interactions. Given that students who enter an FYC classroom, as I discussed in the previous chapter, seem to enter them with ascribed identities related to past reputation, it is important to understand how perceptions related to these identities may shift.

Perhaps the best explanation of this shift that may result from the rhetorical bleeding that occurs across interactions are Elliot's aforementioned comments concerning taking small data sets and Herbert's reflections regarding email and comments in student drafts. For Elliot, an informal, personal interaction that might have been initiated in a hallway just outside of class may provide one data point. However, as this interaction transitions into the classroom, a location within a location is created–one where the new location's level of formality is heightened, where the topic of conversation becomes more academic in nature, and where another data point is taken. And with each data point, as Elliot notes,

> what I found fairly regularly is the construction of who I think that student is usually takes, you know, one comment or one paper or one something to, you know, take that construct and tear it all down because I was clearly wrong.

For Herbert, the accumulated knowledge gained from his interactions with students was best exemplified by the liminal nature of this digital communication with

them. Similar to the hallway-classroom transition that Elliot described, Herbert described a kind of digital overlay that made it difficult to assign each interaction its own location. At times, his previous emails with students shaped the digital comments Herbert left for students. At other times, it was the digital comments on the margins of student papers that Herbert referenced in his emails. In each scenario, the previous interaction provided Herbert with a small data set that informed not only the next interaction, but his overall perception of students. Once again, as his digital interactions with students transitioned from email to the digital margins of their papers, from personal to more academic purposes and vice versa, it appears that, like Elliot, the data set that is acquired is more fine-tuned, more accurate.

For Rose and Marissa, the kind of feedback they offer students is very much influenced by the respective shift in student perceptions that is facilitated by their interactions with students. When Rose receives a paper from a student with whom she has interacted with in or outside of class, she notes that the feedback she provides that student will often "circle back to things I know about their lives that they've shared with me." At times, she uses this accumulated knowledge that she has gained through those interactions to help students make connections in their papers related to their personal experiences. In other instances, those interactions prompt her to adjust the tone she uses in her feedback. For some students, her tone is much more straightforward and to the point, especially if she learns that they "have had positive and/or successful past educational experiences." For others, based "on where they're at and who they are, I tailor my tone to that and...hedge a suggestion" rather than being too direct. Here, Rose's

reference to “where they’re at” indexes students entering her classroom with less than stellar past educational performances. Similarly, for Marissa, when she provides feedback to students who she has interacted with and has gained multiple data points through those interactions, she tries to be “very mindful about how I come back and ask questions about how that” personal communication is being communicated in a paper.

Similarly, referring to these early interactions with students, Sue reflects “that those experiences help the comfort level of the students, so that can humanize them in a way beyond what I'm just seeing of a one-dimensional student.” In Stuart’s case, the 10–15-minute interactions that tend to extend into the classroom and eventually into office hours visits often help him “gain a better understanding of them as a person too, and what they're going through in their lives and how that might shape some of their choices on some of the assignments I give.” And finally, both Sue and Elliot acknowledge that those one-on-one interactions with students provide them with “a much more holistic and nuanced understanding” (Sue) of students that, according to Elliot, “can be valuable in perceiving them, not simply as students, but as human beings that happen to be students.”

Given the aforementioned perceptions (see Chapter 4) that faculty participants reported relating to students’ reputational factors such as education, mental health, and socioeconomic status, what these reflections suggest is that the context these interactions provide may make those preliminary ascribed identities less static and more dynamic. For instance, as stated earlier, students’ past educational performance was generally regarded by participants as a major challenge to success facing community college students upon entering an FYC classroom. However, for Herbert, those “first 10 to 15 minutes before

class...really start to shape [his perception] a little bit because if there's really just a pattern that students who get there early are the ones who really want to engage." Here, though Herbert is fully aware of the perception that students who enter his composition course might not have experienced much academic success in prior academic institutions, those early interactions right before class reframe his focus from their past academic struggles to their present investment with school. Thus, rather than ascribing to his students a normalized ethotic attribute such as that of a 'high school dropout,' Herbert instead operates through a newly recognized identity, that of a student who is committed to their education, thanks to his interaction with that student. Again, the important takeaway here is not necessarily that interacting with students helped facilitate a change in how Herbert perceives his students. What is worth noting is that through these interactions, Herbert is able to see past otherwise static reputational markers related to education that often shape his perception of students as writers.

In a similar way, faculty's perception of the negative role that students' financial conditions (related to Aristotelian notion of wealth) play in their college success seems to be impacted by their interaction with students. As previously discussed, throughout the course of this study, participants identified students' financial status as a risk factor to overall college success. At times, their financial instability is evidenced by reportedly having to work multiple jobs just to pay for college and/or make ends meet. At other times, it is evidenced by the lack of access to basic resources such as housing and food. The root of their financial woes notwithstanding, it is clear that students enter FYC

classrooms with a reputation that their economic conditions present a large and difficult hurdle that they must overcome.

Given this positionality entering the classroom, findings from this study suggested that the interactions between faculty and students, such as those reported in earlier chapters, moved faculty past those initial perceptions that singularly framed students as risk factors due to their economic conditions. In Sue's case, interactions with students allow her to "make a connection...that can definitely change perceptions" early on in the course. For instance, "seeing students reading their assignments on the phone before class," such as during those 10-15 minutes prior to class, is a stark reminder, on the one hand, of students' lack of access to other reliable technology at home. Their reliance on cell phones to access learning management systems and complete short, and at times, long writing assignments, indexes the aforementioned perceptions regarding their precarious economic conditions that leaves students in need of "basic survival things like a place to live" (Elliot). In other words, as faculty witness students completing school work on their cell phones, they are reminded that those cell phones may represent, for the majority of community college students entering their FYC courses, the only technology to which their economic conditions afford them access. On the other hand, those interactions also reveal their resourcefulness and dedication to the course. Witnessing students make do with the technology that they do have available seems to help faculty like Sue and Elliot assign new markers of identity--shifting from the kind of common ethe (i.e., at risk, poor, in need) ascribed to community college students, to ethe (i.e., resourceful, perseverant) that push against socially determined identity markers.

Ultimately, I suggest that the liminal nature of interactions and the accumulated knowledge that is gained make them sites, or pathways, where students' academic potential becomes more noticeable than their past academic failures; where their mental health and economic struggles become opportunities for the college to help and intervene as much as risk factors for retention and success.

*Interactions and Dispositions*

In a similar fashion, it also appears that as faculty and student interactions vacillate between personal and academic in nature, between digital and face-to-face, and between formal and informal contexts–that faculty-related perceptions concerning student dispositions (ethotic virtues) are influenced. In particular, as I describe in chapter 4, interview data suggests that faculty participants privilege three discrete student dispositions–confidence, liberality, and hard work. Moreover, it appears to also be the case that it is not just the presence of these dispositions that faculty privilege, but the right, or mean, manifestations of these ethos-related virtues. Within this context, the discussion in this chapter regarding the accumulated knowledge gained from interactions becomes relevant once again, as it offers a nascent explanation of how faculty come to perceive and thus situate the manifestation of these dispositions within the mean of the aforementioned deficiency-excess continuum.

Recall that for Sue, the follow up conversations that occur at college-wide events such as poetry readings are an extension of classroom interactions. And as these interactions transition, or rhetorically bleed, from one site to the next, they provide Sue "a

more holistic picture of what is going on in students' lives." Thus, if upon first glance a student's behavior in the classroom may prompt Sue to position that student on the deficiency end of the "hardworking" continuum, it appears that their interaction outside of class may prompt Sue to reposition their perception of that student in relation to hardworking somewhere closer to the mean of the continuum.

Similarly, for Elliot, getting to class 10-15 minutes early and interacting with students as they move from a hallway into the classroom represents an

> opportunity to create that weird little space in which we're in class, but class hasn't quite officially started because I find that that's in the moments when students are most willing to be, for lack of a better term, maybe their more authentic self.

By dwelling in a location within a location, the influence on how Elliot might perceive a student builds off the latter interaction. And once again, such accumulation provides Elliot with more nuanced and accurate data points regarding students–information that is necessary because, as Elliot notes, "I'm prone to assumptions that might not hold true." Thus, if Elliot walks into an FYC classroom assuming students to be close minded, a disposition he believes to be a particular challenge facing community college students that I describe in chapter 4, the new data set he acquires has the potential to move such perceptions more to the mean position within the "liberality" continuum.

In Marissa's case, specifically referencing the varied digital email interactions with her students, she acknowledges that "When students communicate with me, I tend to perceive them as much more motivated and conscientious as students, even if they're

struggling just because I see the effort." When reflecting on those interactions that occur right before or after class, she notes that those

> tend to be highly impactful for me, coming up after class and asking me questions for clarification because they're self-advocating and that helps me to see that they are engaged and motivated. So those probably are the most impactful because they have to do something outside of the classroom.

In these examples, Marissa attributes to her students a motivational disposition as a direct result of their willingness to engage in two different interactions. This is worth noting because her ability to perceive her students as "motivated" is a strong departure from her preliminary perceptions (see chapter 4) that students appear to enter her class with a "just give me my grades so I can get into the nursing program" attitude. For Marissa, such an attitude presents a major challenge for community college students because it often results in a complete lack of motivation to do more than the minimum in an FYC classroom. Thus, when we situate her comments regarding the impact that those interactions with students have on her ability to perceive them as motivated, we are better able to recognize the subtle but integral role that interactions can play in tearing down initial perceptions related to certain ethotic virtues, or dispositions.

Additionally, we see that these interactions have a similar effect on how Herbert perceives his students. In the previous chapter, Herbert stated that at times, there seems to be an unfortunate tendency to frame students as being lazy (deficiency end of the hard-working continuum) based on some of their behavior in the classroom. This proclivity is further reinforced because more often than not, we tend to have a myopic view of them

when we assume that how they behave or perform in our classroom is the same as how they perform or behave in classrooms beyond our own. It is within this context that Herbert discusses the ways that his interactions with students help to tear down those initial perceptions.

> So I learn so much more about them as people when they come to my office hours and those out of classroom interactions…[I learn] about how busy they are...how hard of workers they are and how the interests are really shaped and focus on very particular things.

In this example, we see Hebert's perception related to hard work moving along the deficiency/excess continuum described in the previous chapter. More specifically, rather than seeing them as lazy, his interactions with students help reposition his perceptions of students' work ethic closer to the intermediate, or mean position within the continuum, which Aristotle characterizes as being a virtue. This is an important insight because it highlights an important contribution of this study–namely, that interactions between faculty (audience) and students (writers) may represent alternative sites, or pathways, for faculty (audience) to perceive students' writerly ethos.

Finally, perhaps the most notable example of a participant's perception shifting towards the intermediate position of the virtue continuum is Rose. During her first interview, Rose reflected on her experience with a student who, from a first impression, appeared to be extremely close-minded in relation to his political and academic views. However, she notes that "after a few personal exchanges, I [saw] him as a different person." Specifically, Rose recalls how in class, this student

> responded to everybody kindly and respectfully in-person and online (discussion boards). And their views were very different from his clearly politically. And he asked for their patience with his views, which I found was really moving in a way because he understood that he was kind of outlier there. And then in this last paper he wrote about his grandma that he had was actually an immigrant from Mexico.

From this excerpt, we can clearly see Rose's perception shift in relation to this student's liberality. Though her first impression led her to perceive him as simply an extremely close-minded guy from "a small, rural, conservative town," the accumulated knowledge she gained as a result of the face-to-face and digital interactions had with him shifted her views dramatically towards the middle. After those interactions, Rose was pleasantly surprised by her student's open-minded disposition; by his willingness to invite other perspectives as well as account for and be open about his own positionality.

On the other hand, I must also point out, for participants like Stuart, certain interactions tend to move him away from the mean and instead, closer to the excess or deficiency positions. Specifically reflecting on some of his digital interactions with students, he notes that at times, after he "looks at their writing when they're sending me emails or it could just be a text, you know, with no capitals, no punctuation," he tends to think of students differently. Though Stuart did not explicitly describe what he meant by "differently," it is not out of the question to at least suggest that his perceptions of students shifted away from the middle with respect to certain virtues. This same shift to

the ends of the continuum seems to be true of Marissa when she states,

> But a student who shows up late for the meeting, a student who doesn't have their work completed, a student who is, you know, not focused, a student that I constantly have to tell, please get off the phone. These are all things where I'm going to be like, you know, you're not serious about being here and doing the work. And yeah, it does impact my perceptions.

This excerpt is notable because in it, Marissa explicitly describes the kinds of behaviors that she observes when she interacts with students that impact her perception of them. Though she never concretely pinpoints which interaction she is referencing, once again, it is safe to assume that she is indirectly pointing to both the in and out of the classroom interactions such as the ones discussed earlier in this chapter. More importantly, her assessment about their potential lack of commitment either to the course or attending college is indicative of just how much those interactions might move her perception of students towards the deficient/excess ends of the virtue continuum.

*Interactions and Student Writing*

Beyond appearing to play a role in how faculty perceive students' prior reputation and virtues, interview data revealed that faculty perceptions of and/or responses to students' writing may also be influenced by faculty-student interactions. Throughout the course of this study, faculty participants were asked three questions (see table 8 below) to

specifically reflect on the potential role that their interactions with students shaped their perception of students' writing.

| Interview Questions on Interactions and Linguistic Performance |
| --- |
| Do any of the interactions you have had with students ever come to mind when evaluating/responding to their writing (i.e., paper/writing project)? |
| Is there one kind of interaction that more often comes to mind than others? |
| You have just finished reading and making comments on a students' final draft. You are going back and forth between giving them a grade that has a range of 2-3% percentage points (i.e., 82% - 85%). To what extent, if any, do the interactions you have had with that student inform one way or another the grade that you end up giving that student. Can you elaborate on your thought process? |

Table 8

Overall, answers to these specific questions suggest a relationship between faculty-student interactions and their perception of student writing that is manifested in the grades that they assign to student papers. As their reflections below demonstrate, faculty-student interactions appear to inform how faculty assess their perception of students' linguistic performance in their papers. What findings from this study suggest is that the kinds of faculty-student interactions explored in this study seem to rhetorically bleed into how faculty evaluate students' textual practices (ethos). At times, interview data characterizes this effect in subtle terms. For instance, in responding specifically to the extent that some of their interactions with students come to mind when evaluating students' texts, Elliot notes, "those interactions are going to have at least some latent effect when it comes time to evaluate. Right. And it's because of that, that I'm convinced there's no such thing as a completely 100% unbiased professor. It's not possible." Here, Elliot's reference to a "latent effect" is noteworthy because at the very

least, it signals the possibility that interactions that occur prior to a student submitting their paper may shape not just the kind of feedback that faculty give students, but how a text is assessed, though the precise nature of this laten effect is not concretely described.

In Marissa's response below, we get a slightly clearer idea in relation to the effect that interactions with students might have on how she assesses their linguistic performance.

> ...when I know a student's really trying hard and that they've struggled and they've come to office hours, emailed me, gone to the embedded tutor, or they've gone to the writing center and they are, you know, trying the best they can. And they're still struggling with the aspect. I tend to be a little more grace oriented about it. You know, I tend to be like, well, I know that they're really working on those sentencing issues or that concept, or being able to incorporate sources more effectively.

Marissa's reference to being "a little more grace oriented" suggests that when she is assessing papers of students who have interacted with her (i.e., in office hours, emails), she tends to perhaps be a bit more generous with her evaluation of their work. More specifically, she acknowledges that though their linguistic performance may be marred by certain textual practices related to sentence structure and incorporating sources, she appears to be willing to perhaps overlook those shortcomings as a result of her interactions with students.

And still in other instances, the effect on how faculty perceive students' ethos is described more concretely, as in Herbert's case, where he acknowledges students who he

has interacted with "tend to get maybe a bump or two points" in their final draft. Echoing Marissa, he also tends to be "a little more lenient with grades" as a result, for example, of those students who have shown up to office hours or who have initiated email interactions with him concerning their drafts. Similarly, when discussing whether or not certain interactions come to mind when evaluating/assessing students' performance on their papers, Stuart adds, "Have those interactions impacted how I might assess somebody on a paper? I'm going to have to say, yes, let's be honest." And though Stuart does not explicitly describe the impact here, his reflection on the scenario (see table 8) makes this impact more clear. Reflecting on whether or not those prior interactions with students would play a role in a student's final draft, Stuart acknowledges that if students have "been to my office to discuss their paper," "have made an appointment at the writing center, or "have been to class regularly and stayed after to talk about their progress in the class," that such factors are going to "possible elevate and make me want to go with that higher grade."

One final note on the extent that interactions may impact how faculty assess the writerly moves that students engage in to increase their credibility is that despite Elliot's, Marissa's, Herbert's and Stuart's aforementioned reflections on this relationship, there was a general sense of hesitation when these questions came up in the interview. This hesitation can perhaps be best exemplified by Rose's and Elliot's comments. When asked the extent to which any interactions come to mind when she is evaluating student drafts, Rose states,

> I don't think that they [interactions] do, I'm less interested in behavior modification... to be honest, as long as they're meeting me halfway, I have a lot of patience...I'm not into teaching the rules, it's not my stick...So if [a student] is coming in later,...if you're falling asleep...I don't want to teach the whole, like, 'this is how we do college.' That's not my thing. That doesn't come in, unless it's like the student is not trying and it's clear or there's some other thing going on...But otherwise, no, it's not really of interest to me. I'm looking at their writing.

Rose's comments are noteworthy for the inherent tension they evidence. Clearly, part of this tension stems from her clear discomfort at the possibility that how a student behaves during a faculty-student interaction might play a role in a student's final draft grade. For Rose, allowing such factors to influence or negatively shape our perceptions of how a student linguistically performed in a text presents an ethical dilemma. On the other hand, her acknowledgement that her assessment of their drafts would be influenced if a student is "not trying," at the very least, leaves open the possibility that other factors beyond merely "looking at their writing" may shape her evaluation of their linguistic performance.

We see a similar tension in Elliot's reflection; a tension that on the one hand readily accepts the possible reality that interactions may influence faculty's perception of student's final drafts and on the other, hopes that such an influence may be minimal.

> I remain unconvinced that [being influenced by my interactions with students] is necessarily a bad thing. We're people too. So the perceptions of a student in class,

> in those 15 minutes in office hours, even maybe their kind of digital voice, so to speak, if they're fond of emailing, I think that there's of course going to be that bandwidth within any professor's brain as he or she looks at whatever it is we're trying to assess. I don't think it's possible or even preferable to turn that particular piece off. What I hope as an individual professor is that what those perceptions are doing is not adjusting or inflating or deflating whatever number comes out on the other side. What I'm hoping is that my perception of that student based on those interactions is simply giving me a keener insight to that work itself.

Again, for Elliot, it seems impossible for faculty to be able to simply ignore, when they are evaluating student drafts, those interactions with students during those 15 minutes before or after class or after digitally interacting with them. And though he does not see this phenomenon as "necessarily a bad thing," his reflection also suggests an unease with this prospective reality that seems to describe a particular pathway for how faculty perceive student ethos. Like Rose, Elliot redirects his attention to the text, hoping that in the end, it is students' linguistic moves that primarily determine his assessment of their work.

In all, what these reflections signal is the potential to frame interactions between faculty and students as alternative pathways to perceiving students' ethos. At times, interactions with faculty specifically prompted faculty to question the markers of identity they and others typically ascribed to community college students. Rather than remaining static, what this study suggests is that interactions between students and faculty reveal or

facilitate a more dynamic nature to these ascribed identities. In other words, by humanizing students and helping to forge a connection with students, interactions appear to create a space where faculty's perceptions of students' otherwise static identities become much more malleable; an alternative space where faculty perceptions of students as writers are created and shaped in relation to prior reputation. As Elliot notes, "what I found fairly regularly is that the construction of who I think that student is usually takes one comment, one paper or one interaction to take that construct and tear it all down because I was clearly wrong." And for Elliot, it is precisely due to this overwhelming potential for those initial perceptions that faculty make about students to be wrong that he places so much emphasis and importance on interactions.

However, beyond their effect on prior reputation, I also suggest that interactions may also inform faculty perceptions related to virtue, a second ethotic quality. Again, the important takeaway here is that when faculty interact with students, it is inadequate to simply conclude that their overall perceptions of students tend to change. What I am proposing here is that those changes in perception are related to factors closely aligned to how writers' credibility is perceived. As the discussion above revealed, faculty enter classrooms with overall perceptions related to certain student virtues that are situated all along an excess/deficiency continuum. For some, it appears that interactions help move them from one of the extremes of this continuum to the center. For others, interacting with students facilitates movement away from the center. It is precisely this kind of movement to and/or away from the middle of the continuum that Rose indexes below, stating that as a result of her interactions with students, her "preconceived notions of

students are kind of reinforced, but generally those definitions are pushed...They're always broken and shattered, and somewhere shifted." In many ways, her statement here largely reflects a general finding related to interactions held by all faculty participants of this study; namely, that interactions with students may represent a space where student ascribed or inhabited identities and dispositions are negotiated.

Finally, one last takeaway from this study is related to the reported role that interactions between faculty and students may have on how faculty perceive students' performance with respect to their drafts. For some faculty participants, the role that interactions might play with respect to linguistic performance was more tangibly discussed than by others. Those for whom this role was less concretely expressed, their reflections suggest that they simply could not quantify in any more exact terms the impact that their interactions with students might have on their perception of student work. However, as Rose's and Elliot's reflections indicate, it might also be the case that participants' reflections on this finding might have been influenced by a general, underlying tension related to this phenomenon--a tension that elucidates both a reluctant acceptance of this potential reality and a wishful optimism in its limited influence with respect to student's work.

# CHAPTER 6

## NEW MODEL OF ETHOS

> Thus, the pragmatists' ethos, descended from Aristotle, is constructed within verbal interaction and is purely internal to discourse; the sociologists' ethos, on the other hand, is inscribed in a symbolic exchange governed by social mechanisms and external institutional positions. (Amossy 5)

In the excerpt above, Ruth Amossy succinctly captures the sharp polemic to which studies of ethos tend to give rise. And in many ways, Amossy's words lay out the appropriate scholarly landscape to discuss the findings of this present study. As I stated at the outset of this dissertation, this study sought to explore alternative pathways for perceiving ethos--pathways that do not privilege or are located within a student's linguistic performance manifested through a text as the primary means of perceiving ethos cultivation. In contrast to such a pragmatic view of ethos, this study explored, from a broad perspective, the symbolic exchanges that Amossy alludes to; and more specifically, on better understanding the social mechanisms and circumstances which, according to a sociological lens, shape and influence how the power bestowed unto words is perceived. With this in mind, I begin this chapter by arguing that faculty perceptions related to students' past reputation and virtue may reflect, at least in part, the underlying "social mechanisms" and "circumstances" into which community college students enter. As I discuss below, these perceptions help us better understand the social position that community college students tend to occupy when they first sit down to write in their FYC courses. Subsequently, I discuss the productive potential of framing interactions between faculty and students as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos. Here, describe how

these interactions influence the perception formation process described in the previous chapter. Finally, I end the chapter by describing a relational model of ethos that I argue better accounts for the complicated positionalities with which contemporary community writers enter FYC classrooms.

Perceptions and Prediscursive Ethos

In chapter 4, I reported that faculty participants generally tended to frame their perceptions of students along the following four dimensions--students' past education, students' mental health, students' socio-economic status, and students' dispositions. After further analyzing these dimensions through an Aristotelian framework of ethos, it became clear that they indexed two specific ethotic qualities, prior reputation (past education, mental health, socioeconomic status) and virtue (dispositions). Aligning faculty perceptions to certain attributes related to ethos was an important contribution gained from the interview data of this study because it opened up the possibility that other factors outside the text might influence how faculty perceive students' ethos.

In relation to both prior reputation and dispositions (virtue), the findings presented in chapter 4 suggest that FYC community college faculty tend to operate from often shared, tacit perceptions that shape and inform not only their general opinion of students– but more specifically, their opinion of certain characteristics related to students' writerly ethos. At times, these perceptions related to ethos may simply reveal the kinds of identities ascribed to students. At other times, they may point to markers of identity that students inhabit. Whether ascribed or inhabited, these perceived markers of identity, I argue, provide us with an insight into the sociological conditions under which students

enter FYC classrooms; namely, their social position entering the classroom. According to Bourdieu, determining one's social position entering a discourse has important implications. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, the sociologist states,

> A performative utterance is destined to fail each time that it is not pronounced by a person who has the 'power' to pronounce it, or, more generally, each time that the 'particular persons and circumstances in a given case' are not 'appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked'; in short, each time the that the speaker does not have the authority to emit the words that he utters. (111)

Here, Bourdieu reminds us that a rhetor's (student) perceived social position within an institution plays an integral role in whether or not a performative utterance, such as those made within an academic paper, is successfully deemed credible by a respective audience. In many ways, if a speaker or writer does not possess the right social function within an institution, it appears that their verbal or written utterance fails to be effective or recognized as having any authority. For the purposes of this study then, it appears that certain reputational characteristics (i.e., having a strong educational background, good health, and economic security) and dispositions (i.e., liberality, confidence, open-mindedness) are privileged by faculty in community college FYC classrooms and bestow unto students the right social position. Thus, students who are in possession of or manifest such traits seem to become more "appropriate for the invocations" that are made on the papers they are assigned to write.

If Bourdieu is correct, participants' answers regarding these factors suggest that students' social position may potentially undermine their ability to access "the official,

orthodox and legitimate speech" (pg. 109) of the institution. Regarding their prior reputation, whether it was participants' proclivity to see students as "academically at risk," or it was their tendency to frame students' lack of economic security as an integral challenge to their success, en masse, their reflections in relation to these students' prior reputation reveal, at best, students' uncomfortable social positionality with respect to the institution. In relation to certain dispositions, if to be considered an authorized and credible voice in the community college FYC classroom requires a student to be open-minded (liberal), then faculty perceptions of students as either close-minded or uncritical do not bode well for students. If to be considered to be an authorized representative means to display a sense of confidence, then students' perceived insecurity and/or arrogance seem to stand in the way of attaining any such authorized or credible status in and through their writing. Finally, if to attain the right social position means to be perceived as hardworking in the way they dwell, then faculty participants' proclivity to at times perceive students either as lazy or completely overextended does not facilitate the acquisition of such social function.

Such faculty perceptions related to past reputation and virtue reveal students' precarious social function within a community college and such revelation is important because it prompts us to account for the existence of what Amossy refers to as a rhetor's prior ethos and to explore pathways for accounting such ethos. Regarding this prior ethos, it is clear that long before a student enters their FYC classrooms, and certainly long before they produce any kind of written utterance within those settings, faculty participants hold both tacit and explicit perceptions of those students. Whether related to

students' prior reputation and/or dispositions--two ethotic factors most relevant to this study-- these perceptions resemble Amossy's "stereotyped representations" that are "part of the audience's encyclopedic knowledge" (19) of the rhetor. Though Amossy's notion of prior ethos is a productive one to refer to the type of knowledge or stereotyped representation of an audience, I argue that the term *prediscursive ethos* is more appropriate for a number of reasons. First, the term *prediscursive* more accurately accounts for its contrasting temporal relation to the discursive ethos, as it is evoked, or "mobilized by the oral or written speech in a specific situation of utterance" (19). In other words, it calls attention to the pre-existing stereotyped representations that exist long before students sit down to write in a community college FYC classroom and that also seem to shape how their credibility is perceived by faculty. Second, it underscores the need to pay attention to nondiscursive factors, such as faculty perceptions of the sociological conditions and the stereotypes that underlie them, that influence how students are perceived by faculty in a writing classroom.

What I argue, then, is that anytime a community college student sits down to write, a relational model of ethos is at work and must be accounted for; namely, a prediscursive and discursive ethos. The former, as Amossy argues, acts as the background against which an oral/written discourse is evaluated. It is constituted of the rhetor's social position that is predominantly shaped by the audience's prior image of the rhetor--an image, as this study suggests, that is very much influenced by their perceptions related to certain reputational factors as well as dispositions. On the other hand, a writer's discursive ethos, as Amossy notes, is constructed at the level of performative utterances.

Its constitution is composed of the stylistic and conventional features reflected by the writerly moves that appear on paper.

Within this relational framework of ethos, both the textual features that appear on paper (discursive ethos) and the sociological conditions (prediscursive ethos) under which those are made are accounted for. Given the reliance on students' linguistic performance as manifested through the texts they create, it appears that students must employ stylistic features that seek to create a positive impression by displacing or revising the prior image that an audience might hold. In the cases where faculty hold a positive prior image of students, the goal of the linguistic choices made in a paper is not so much to uproot or modify but rather, to intentionally rely on that prior image. Whatever the rhetorical purpose, it appears that the writerly character constructed through the text (discursive ethos) can perhaps be better understood as the latest layer of credibility–one that reflects a prediscursive and discursive reality that both faculty and students have the agency to shape.

Interactions and Prediscursive Ethos

In chapter five, I explained the ways that faculty-student interactions seem to shape faculty perceptions with respect to student prior reputation, student dispositions, and student linguistic performance–three areas related to ethos. At times, these interactions solidified such ethos-related perceptions. At other times, they simply facilitated faculty's ability to revise how they perceive students along those ethotic characteristics. And still in other instances, the faculty-student interactions helped to tear down any preconceived perceptions that faculty might have of students' writerly ethos

before entering an FYC classroom. The resulting effect on faculty perceptions notwithstanding, it is worth noting here that faculty perceptions related to students' prior reputation and dispositions do more than give us a general view of how faculty perceive students–they provide insight related to how faculty perceive students as writers; perceptions that often exist before a student even enters the classroom, and certainly before a student has submitted a final draft of a writing project.

In light of this reality, this study's findings related to the potential for interactions to shape the perceptions upon which a student's social function within an institution is based is an important observation to note because it highlights the capacity for interactions to influence how faculty perceive students' prediscursive ethos. In other words, as already stated, adopting a sociological lens of ethos helps us acknowledge the presence of certain pre-existing underlying social conditions that play a significant role in how a writer's utterances are evaluated. According to Amossy, this apriori ethotic reality is precisely what a writer attempts to revise, erase, or rely upon through the verbal means of discourse (discursive ethos). However, I suggest that the interactions between faculty and students present faculty with alternative pathways to perceive or account for students' prediscursive ethos. Thus, rather than relying solely on student writing "to displace or modify the prior image of the [writer]" (20), a view that Amossy adopts and one that is in line with an Aristotelian model of ethos, I argue that interactions between faculty and students represent alternative pathways that can be used for similar purposes.

This possibility is perhaps most evident in Elliot's reflection on the importance of those interactions with students, noting that the reason he is,

> constantly trying to find ways to interact within the classroom and even outside of it, is because I know for a fact that I'm probably getting things [perceptions] wrong... [Interactions] are the only way I can learn what I think I really need to know about a student.

Here, Elliot explicitly acknowledges what happens when he interacts with students; namely, that his preconceived notions of students, which he suggests are often incorrect, are most susceptible to change as a result of those interactions. Thus, if a community college faculty enters an FYC classroom having to modify or displace their prior image of students to one that more accurately represents their students--a reality that seems all too common based on the faculty perceptions reported in this study--it appears that interactions represent for faculty a pathway for reconceiving of such prediscursive ethos. When a student interacts with a faculty member in those 10-15 minutes prior to class beginning, in office hours, in digital venues, or in outside of class events, they appear to be engaging in prediscursive activities that I argue help to potentially alter the image that a faculty member may hold of a student. And if this prior image is appropriately altered as a result of the interaction with students in such a way that improves the writer's legitimacy and social position, they may be improving their chances that the discursive utterances performed (on a paper) may be deemed more effective, regardless of how rhetorically sound those performances might be.

The possibility that a student, through interacting with faculty, may improve their social position in such a way that it may actually partially influence the extent to which their linguistic performances are deemed effective is supported by what participants had

to say in relation to their interactions and their evaluations of students' discursive utterances. In chapter 5, I described and suggested that interactions between faculty and students seem to shape how faculty perceive students' linguistic performances. In Stuart's case, he acknowledges that a student's overall grade on a paper will be positively impacted if "they've been to my office to discuss it [the paper]" or if the student "had an appointment at the writing center or they've been to class regularly." On the other hand, Stuart also notes when students fail to properly contribute to class discussions or arrive late to class constantly, "that might have a tendency, just being perfectly honest here...to possibly be on the downside of that [their final draft grade]". This excerpt is insightful because it helps explain how a faculty's perception of a student's linguistic performance manifested through the written text could be shaped by factors that precede the discursive ethos cultivation that takes place on a paper. The explicit references in Stuart's comments to office hours visits and in-class interactions (class discussions) suggest that those interactions taking place between faculty and students could broadly represent dwelling places where prediscursive activities occur that influence how linguistic utterances are evaluated.

A similar dynamic is evidenced in Herbert's reflections about his interactions with students. Responding specifically to the aforementioned scenario (see table 8) where participants were asked to discuss their thought process on assigning a final draft grade while accounting for their interactions with students, Herbert acknowledges that his previous interactions with students would make an impact on their final draft grade. For example, for "those students who don't ever do anything" in class or who decide to not

follow through with the digital comments and suggestions he has made on their drafts, Herbert acknowledges that "there are potential effects" to their final draft grade than those who behave and/or respond otherwise. Like Stuart, Herbert's response indexes past interactions with these students; namely, the in-class and digital ones. And, as was the case with Stuart, his references to these interactions within the context of discussing his evaluation of students' final drafts are indicative of the underlying ethotic potential that I argue these interactions have.

What I suggest, then, is that when we turn our attention to the interactions between faculty and students and frame and analyze them through an ethotic lens, we are uncovering dwelling spaces, or pathways, that on the one hand, account for existing but often tacit perceptions that shape how students are perceived as writers, and on the other hand, serve as sites where such perceptions may be shaped and altered. I contend that this process of dwelling, where faculty interact with students in certain ways and in certain locations, appears to have a latent, accumulating influence on the perception formation process that ultimately influences how effective faculty may perceive the rhetorical moves students make in their texts--a contention that is perhaps most explicitly supported by Elliot below:

> We're professors, but we're human beings first. And as human beings, our perception or understanding of that student and those interactions are naturally going to have at least some latent effect when it comes time to evaluate. Right. And it's because of that, that I'm convinced there's no such thing as a completely 100% unbiased professor.

This perception formation process, which leads to the kind of latent, accumulating effect Elliot references, may be envisioned as follows: As students enter FYC community college classrooms for the first time, they are entering a space where their social position may undermine their ability to speak or write with any kind of legitimized authority. Regarding their precarious positionality, it appears that part of this social function is shaped by the kinds of preconceived perceptions that faculty participants from this study reported. I refer to the prior image that is based on these preconceived perceptions as students' prediscursive ethos. When an FYC student produces and creates texts (papers, essays), her prediscursive ethos is activated, or mobilized, and functions as the sociological backdrop upon which the writerly moves or linguistic performances in which students engage are set. It is here, then, that her social position within the institution is invoked. It is at this juncture where faculty's preconceived ideas regarding students' past reputation and dispositions are called forth. And it is the credibility of these texts that her prior image shapes.

With this dynamic in place, it appears that when faculty and students interact, they are engaging in liminal dwelling activities that rhetorically bleed, resulting in erasing, modifying, or solidifying faculty's prediscursive ethos. Through their interactions with students, faculty begin to perceive students' writerly identities in new ways. For some faculty, this may mean that they are able to see past certain reputational markers related to students' past education or economic status. For others, the interactions lead to a more nuanced perspective of certain student dispositions–a perspective regarding these dispositions that is more measured and tempered. Ultimately,

it is through this continuous, sociohistorically threaded process, that faculty's perception of students' ethos-cultivating efforts may be shaped.

Overall, when we account for the interactions between faculty and students that take place in office hours, in digital environments, before or after class, or during college events, a relational model of ethos emerges that I suggest better describes the context that contemporary community college writers enter. Within this framework, ethos constitutes both the discursive, rhetorical and stylistic moves students employ on their papers as well as the prediscursive, relational activities that shape the sociological conditions that underlie and tacitly shape how effective student texts are perceived to be. I contend that such a relational model of ethos is needed given how differently community college rhetors are perceived when they enter textual discursive exchanges from their classical counterparts. Lacking many of the ascribed or inhabited markers of identity conducive to cultivating a positive writerly identity, these rhetors would benefit greatly from a credibility framework that accounts for such normalizing identities and provides a pathway for such identities to be reimagined. And it is this relational model of ethos, one that is mediated through both interactional and linguistic performances/activities, where such benefit may be found.

Extending the reflexive theoretical turn manifested in feminist notions of location, the relational model of ethos I call for *locates* pathways for perceiving ethos not just within or along the margins, but beyond the text. It highlights specific dwelling sites outside of the text where writers and audiences come together and potentially negotiate discursive authority. Additionally, it makes more concrete other factors for which our

reflexive proclivities as a field must account. Namely, it prompts us to more intentionally consider, name, and question the integral role that our prediscursive perceptions of students may play in how we perceive their work–especially when such perceptions both obfuscate the productive potential of it and in doing so, positions us more readily to highlight their "rough and rowdy ways" of being and speaking.

Limitations, Implications, Conclusion

Perhaps the clearest limitation of this study concerns the lack of student voices. In particular, though the study broadly focused on faculty-student interactions, only a faculty perspective regarding these interactions was obtained. This limitation in the scope of study participants, one that was mainly due to the global pandemic moment under which it was conducted, prevented me from making broader arguments about the relationship between interactions and ethos. More specifically, given that notions of ethos index both how it is cultivated and how such cultivated efforts are perceived, the lack of student voices limited my ability to speak on the ethos-cultivating potential of students interacting with faculty. Thus, I focused my discussion efforts on the possible ways that such interactions may function as alternative pathways for perceiving ethos–not to their ethos-cultivating potential for rhetors.

In light of this limitation, one potential implication of this study is the need to better understand students' perceptions of their interactions with faculty. Obtaining a student's perspective could certainly shed light into the ways that these interactions could be considered what Hannah and Arreguin (2017) referred to as micromoments of socialization–formal and "informal opportunities for engagement and case-making that

arise as newcomers are socialized into new communities" (183).

Another limitation of this study concerns the typology of interactions that I describe in chapter 5. In particular, though I argue in this study that these interactions present alternative sites for perceiving ethos, my data analysis did not concentrate on determining if some interactions influenced participants' perceptions of student ethos more than others. In other words, it is not clear from this study whether, for example, office hours visits shift how faculty perceive students' writerly identities in more meaningful ways than those interactions that take place 10-15 minutes or after class. Also interesting and worth noting is that though email digital comments in student drafts were the interactions most referenced by participants in this domain, newer digital interactions that have increased in use since the global pandemic, such as video conferencing calls, may prove to be important sites worthy of further research.

Given this limitation, there is certainly room for researchers to focus their methodological gaze on better understanding the unique role those individual domains of interactions may play in how faculty perceive ethos. Understanding the unique influence that each domain may have on how ethos is perceived by faculty may potentially have large implications for pedagogical practices and curriculum design in writing classrooms. In particular, findings from this study may prompt FYC faculty in community colleges to broaden classroom conversations about ethos beyond the text. In addition, given the relationship that this study reported between interactions and perceiving ethos, community college FYC faculty may also be prompted to be more strategic and

intentional in the ways they plan for and/or account for interactions with students throughout the course of a given semester.

One last relevant limitation of this study concerns the reported relationship between interactions and faculty assessment of student papers. In chapter five, I discussed that faculty participants acknowledged the potential ways that their prior interactions with students may have influenced the final grade that was assigned on students' final drafts. As I stated, while faculty participants as a whole seemed uncomfortable discussing this possibility, my study at the very least opened up the possibility that factors outside of students' linguistic performance are at play when faculty assign grades on student papers. This potential impact of interactions on assessment of students' drafts notwithstanding, one limitation has to do with the sample size of this study. For such a correlation to be more generalizable, a much larger sample size of faculty participants would be recommended as well as employing a mixed-methods approach. This latter approach would be needed to more clearly demonstrate the extent to which those students with whom faculty interact the most receive markedly different grades on final drafts than those students with whom faculty do not interact. In addition, future researchers might consider study participants representative of four-year institutions. Given that this study focused on faculty perceptions of and interactions with community college students, obtaining such perceptions of students in four-year institutions would be a natural next step to this project, as the demographics of FYC students enrolled in four-year institutions vary drastically from those in community college settings.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study presents a preliminary but important step in a larger goal to uncover the ecology of forces from which writerly credibility emerges and is perceived. Given the ever-increasing heterogeneous population of students entering community colleges and higher education at large, writing studies must continue to explore theories of and frameworks for ethos that reflect the ever-evolving, multiple roles and identities with which contemporary rhetors enter FYC classrooms. In many ways, this project reflects such an endeavor. First, by making more concrete the prediscursive conditions under which community college students perform linguistically, this study prompts us to continue to look inward to critically question our own tacit assumptions that too often ascribe unto our students, identities that leave no comfortable ethos for them to employ. Second, by exploring alternative pathways where such writerly identities might first be perceived, this project envisions a model of ethos that accounts for the liminal and nonlinear relationships between rhetors and audiences most often manifested through their interactions. Ultimately, my hope is that such a model will position us to frame our students' ways of speaking and ways of being not as rough and rowdy, but instead, as emblematic of an ever-expanding communicative landscape of which we are only just beginning to understand.

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# APPENDIX A

## FACULTY INFORMATION/RECRUITMENT LETTER

**Study Recruitment Email: Interview**
**Subject**: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Mark Hannah in the Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study of faculty participants' perceptions on the available means students have to increase their credibility as writers. I am recruiting individuals to conduct two separate virtual semi-structured audio-recorded interviews through Google Meet, which will take approximately 60 minutes each. One interview will take place in September of 2020 and the second interview will take place in October of the 2020 semester.

All audio data collected will be transcribed, anonymized, and kept password-protected. All audio data will be destroyed once the data is transcribed.

You may withdraw at any time without penalty and your decision not to participate has no negative consequences. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (480 ) 654 - 7725.

Alex Arreguin
English Residential Faculty
aarreguin@mesacc.edu
480-654-7725

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Arizona State University and Maricopa County Community College District. If you have concerns about this study, or you feel that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact:

Maricopa Community Colleges
IRB Office
2411 W14th St
Tempe, AZ 85281
irb_office@domail.maricopa.edu

Arizona State University
Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
ASU Centerpoint, Suite 312
660 South Mill Ave
Tempe, AZ 85281
research.integrity@asu.edu

# APPENDIX B

## FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL I

**Background**

1. Can you talk to me a little bit about your journey to get to MCC? (personal, academic, professional)

2. Why did you choose to ultimately work at a CC?

**Perception of Past Reputation Questions**

1. What is it like to work with community college students?
   a. Potential Follow Up: What are your biggest challenges/affordances as a faculty working with cc students?
2. How would you describe the average student at this cc?

3. What are the factors in your students' lives you believe have the biggest impact (positively or negatively) on their success as writers in your ENG 101/102 course?

**Dwelling Practices Questions**

1. During a typical f2f course, what kinds of interactions do you have with students in or outside of class? By interactions, I mean any f2f, phone, or digital communication that you might have with a student during a typical semester.

2. How do these interactions impact your perception of them as students?
   a. Potential follow up: Are there particular kinds of interactions that are the most impactful on your perception of them?

3. Do any of the interactions you have had with students ever come to mind when evaluating/responding to their writing (i.e., paper/writing project)?
   a. Potential Follow Up: If so, can you provide an example?

**Virtues Questions**

1. What characterizes a "good writer" in your class?

2. Overall, what do you hope students' aspirations are for using writing outside of the classroom?

**Wisdom Questions**

1. What skills, knowledge, dispositions do you believe would be helpful for students to possess as they enter your writing class?

**Goodwill Questions**

1. What are the types of audiences that you usually ask students to address in their papers?

2. What are the most important factors you want students to consider regarding audience, and how do you teach students to account for these factors in their writing"?

**Definition Questions**

1. How would you define the term *ethos*?

    a. Potential Follow Up: Is there a particular source (education, work experience (outside of academia), teaching, textbook) that helped shape this definition?

2. When talking about this term with students, what other similar or related terms do you use to describe *ethos*?

**Cultivating Ethos Questions**

1. What are three of the most effective ways for students to establish their *ethos*?

# APPENDIX C

# FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL II

**Past Reputation and Virtue Questions:**

1. In the first round of interviews, when answering questions related to working with cc students, working at a cc, or the affordances/challenges of working at a cc, faculty perceptions of students entering their FYC course seem to be impacted primarily by students'...

- academic preparedness
- dispositions/student behaviors
- multiple roles (parents, spouses, working multiple jobs)
- socioeconomic challenges

Overall, from your experience with students, which of these areas seems to play the largest role in initially shaping your perceptions of them as students?

**Interactions Questions:**

2. In the previous interview, the following interactions with students were the most prevalent discussed by participants.

- 10-15 minutes before class starts/right after class
- Office hours
- Digital (email, LMS announcements, etc.)
- Class time
- Outside of class events (poetry readings, etc.)

Can you discuss how each of these interactions might help to change or solidify your initial perception of students?

3. As you think back to the evaluations of student papers from this semester or previous semesters, do any of the above-mentioned interactions ever come to mind when you are in the midst of reading their final drafts?

Potential Follow-up: Is there one kind of interaction that more often comes to mind than others?

4. Scenario Question: You have just finished reading and making comments on a students' final draft. You are going back and forth between giving them a grade that has a range of 2-3% percentage points (i.e., 82% - 85%). To what extent, if any, do the interactions you have had with that student inform one way or another the grade that you end up giving that student. Can you elaborate on your thought process?

**COVID Questions:**
5**.** Given the emphasis on the relationship between faculty-student perceptions and interactions, what impact, if any, do you think COVID has played (and will continue to play) in the dynamic between these two factors?

**Goodwill Question:**
6. In the first round of interviews, when answering questions related to the different kinds of audiences participants ask students to address in their papers, audiences ranged from peers, professors, to the academic community and civic audiences. What kind of writerly persona do you hope comes through in their writing?

**Open-ended question:**
7. This study has focused on the potential role that interactions between faculty and students may play in helping students negotiate perceptions that faculty might initially make of them as students and/or as writers. Is there anything else you would like to share about the potential role that faculty-student interactions might play in your writing class?

# APPENDIX D

# ANALYTICAL MEMO

**Memo 1: 9/25**
There seems to be continued debate about:

a) whether a person's character, which is generally accepted as an underlying foundation of ethos, is genuine or apparent, and,
b) Whether the character is furnished by the moment of discourse or derived from virtue ( a person's life)

These debates are integral to my study for a number of reasons. First, an underlying question that my study is exploring has to do with alternative ways of establishing ethos. By alternative here I'm suggesting that there might be a potential for writers to establish their ethos outside of how they perform as writers. This study attempts to explore this possibility in two ways: questions about past reputation and questions about interactions. Both past reputation and interactions are factors about a person that occur outside of the moment of discourse (writerly performance).

So far, I have begun to code participants' answers regarding past reputation. In this initial data analysis, what I have found is that there are at least four ways in which participants conceptualize students before they walk into their classrooms. In other words, long before these writers submit their first writing assignment, participants' preconceived ideas about their students' past (or past reputation) fall along four categories:

1. Their academic preparedness
2. Their dispositions/motivations
3. Their complicated lives
4. Socioeconomic status

By and large, participants' answers regarding these 4 areas suggest that faculty in cc hold ambivalent opinions about their students' chances to succeed. This does not mean that they have negative opinions about the students themselves; it simply suggests that what participants' perceptions are about their potential students before they even walk into their classes might potentially lead them to believe that students will struggle in their classes.

In the second interview then, perhaps what I could explore is to more explicitly ask participants something like this:

In the first round of interviews, when answering questions related working with cc students, working at a cc, or the affordances/challenges of working at a cc, four areas seemed to emerge that reflected ways of describing cc students: 1) academic

preparedness, 2) their dispositions, 3) their complicated lives, and 4) their socioeconomic status. Overall, what role do these factors play in their chances of success in college and/or in your writing class?

# APPENDIX E

# IRB APPROVAL/EXEMPTION

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Mark Hannah

CLAS-H: English

480/965-6055 Mark.Hannah@asu.edu

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Dear Mark Hannah:
On 8/21/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

| Type of Review: Initial Study | |
|---|---|
| Title: Faculty Perceptions of Credibility-Cultivating Practices | |
| Investigator: Mark Hannah | |
| IRB ID: STUDY00012332 | |
| Funding: None | |
| Grant Title: None | |
| Grant ID: None | |
| Documents Reviewed: | • AArreguin_Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;<br>• Alex_Arreguin_IRB Social Behavioral 2020_Template.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;<br><br>• Faculty Interview 1 Protocol.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);<br>• Faculty Protocol Interview II.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);<br><br>• Preliminary Institutional Approval.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);<br>• Recruitment Email_ Faculty Interview.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; |

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 8/21/2020.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at

research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Alex Arreguin Alex Arreguin