5-17-2006

College Student Perceptions of Expectations for Academic Literacy in Their First Term

Kathy Seymour Albertson
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

COLLEGE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EXPECTATIONS FOR ACADEMIC LITERACY IN THEIR FIRST TERM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Philosophy

Kathy Seymour Albertson

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2006

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Kathy Seymour Albertson

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 14, 2006 Signature on File
Dr. Nancy Hayward
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

February 14, 2006 Signature on File
Dr. Bennett A. Rafoth
Professor of English

February 14, 2006 Signature on File
Dr. Carole B. Bencich
Professor Emeritus of English

ACCEPTED

Signature on File
Michele S. Schwietz, M.A.
Assistant Dean for Research
The School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: College Student Perceptions of Expectations for Academic Literacy in Their First Term

Author: Kathy Seymour Albertson

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Nancy Hayward

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Bennett A. Rafoth
Dr. Carole B. Bencich

This case study observes five first-term college students as they adapt, apply, or reject academic literacy practices in two of their core courses at Georgia Southern University. This information is intended to help the teacher-researcher as well as her university identify how students make the difficult transition from high school to university literacy expectations.

During the sixteen-week fall semester, the researcher observed students in their classroom environments, interviewed each individual twice, and conducted two group interviews with the volunteers. These volunteers also submitted a writing sample from each class observed. In addition, the two professors of these students also gave an informal interview with the researcher to explain their expectations and observations of typical difficulties they see their students experience. Finally, the researcher triangulated the data in order to identify emergent patterns of student adjustments and reactions to literacy practices.

The data indicates that students need more explicit teaching of assumed, basic literacy practices. Most students in the study could not identify teaching styles to aid in their note-taking practices. Additionally, students rarely attempted

to pre-read their assignments since they had little experience in anticipating what to look for or connect with in the text. Closely connected to these findings were the confidence levels of each student; if they had confidence in their abilities to learn or try new methods, they seemed to adapt or adjust more quickly than students who had little confidence in their literacy practices.

In order to address the literacy difficulties of first-term students, the university's efforts to enhance its student-centered mission need to increase. One of the major areas for improvement is in encouraging faculty to teach with more explicit methods so that more students can move from where they are situated in their literacy competence to where the faculty expect their students to be. In addition, on a national level, research studies in composition, education, and cognitive development need to have more collaborative efforts in publication. These findings, when combined, could allow more practitioners to understand a broader spectrum of interrelated issues concerning literacy development and aid teachers in more quickly addressing student performance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have to start at the beginning with my thanks to so many people for helping me over the years. At IUP, I must remember Aileen Bowman in the financial aid office; she was so helpful with my questions and needs as a forty-one-year-old filing my first-ever FAFSA form and other paperwork to gain entry into the doctoral program. Thanks, too, to Cathy Renwick for her speedy responses to my long distance needs in the Composition/TESOL department. At Georgia Southern, I will forever be grateful to Tim Moore, whose patience with my IRB forms and online tests allowed me to stay sane.

My friends Ellen Hendrix, Laura Milner, Nancy Dessommes, and Nan LoBue (the rest of the Georgia 5) made my summers at IUP so joyous as we ate, studied, and shared classes together. No better support group exists. My new IUP friends Laura Garcia and Sarah Ancira also inspired me as a student and scholar. Dr. Janine Donna gave me the luxury of time with my independent study; I can never express how valuable that reading to learn time was for me. Don McAndrew, Carole Bencich, Gian Pagnucci, Ben Rafoth, Jean Nienkamp, and Nancy Hayward were the reason for my loving every minute of every class.

As a full time, tenured faculty member myself, I am humbled by my dissertation committee's dedication to my work as well as to the IUP program: Dr. Nancy Hayward, Dr. Ben Rafoth, Dr. Carole Bencich. Their devotion to our professional and intellectual development cannot be measured but must be acknowledged.

For my case study, I must thank my Georgia Southern colleagues who allowed me to visit as often as I needed to for my observations. Most important, I thank the nine students who volunteered to help me with this project. For sixteen weeks they tried to accommodate my schedule and tolerated my questions and emails.

A great portion of my sanity is due to my experiences with the National Writing Project. Throughout the years of directing a writing project site and living the life of a teacher-learner, I have come to realize what pre-writing really means. As I thought and talked in rooms with no computer in sight, my clean house and rearranged furniture represent the result of my pre-writing activities. Until I could articulate what I thought, the real writing could not happen. Writing project friends and colleagues Alisa Daniel and June Joyner also offered continuous support in offering to read my rough drafts and listen to my ideas.

Finally, I have to thank my family. To Dad, thanks for asking me each phone call if I was a doctor yet. That motivation has been powerful. To my husband, Bill, who supported me from the beginning, I know our dogs thank you for spending your summers taking care of them while I was away for ten weeks at a time. And I appreciate so much the unspoken cheerleading: leaving me alone to read and write and transcribe and think; cooking and washing dishes while I read and wrote and transcribed and thought; taking care of the yard while I read and wrote and transcribed and thought. I could not have done it without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Ideas are usually interesting precisely to the degree that they are meant to have practical consequences.” (Joseph Harris, 1994)

Personal Context

Over my fifteen-year career in teaching writing, I have tried to look closely at my pedagogy in order to better serve the students in my classes; I try new activities, read from various journals about composition and teaching in general, and talk to colleagues about best practices. During the summer in 1996, I took part in the teachers-teaching-teachers model of professional development through the National Writing Project (NWP). NWP’s insistence on constant reflection continues to energize my teaching and self-discovery. Since 1990, although I have worked with talented and diverse students, I have often been perplexed by the number that lose the Georgia HOPE Scholarship (Helping Outstanding Students Educationally) after their first thirty hours of college life. High school students have to earn a B-average or higher to earn the scholarship. To keep it once at college, they need to maintain a 3.0 or higher at the end of each thirty-hour increment (the end of the freshman, sophomore, and junior years). However, each year newspapers throughout the state report that at least two thirds of these freshmen fail to maintain a 3.0.

As a university faculty member, I have witnessed that much of the sub-B grade point average correlates with two major factors. First, most new students have major difficulties with the adjustment to the day-to-day living of an adult life (getting enough sleep, saying no to peer pressure, developing responsible work

habits like going to bed and getting up on time, and eating well). They also have difficulty adjusting to the college classroom expectations. It is this second difficulty that has affected my thoughts about teaching. In 2003, I examined Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater's text *Academic Literacies*, and while re-reading her descriptions of two college seniors' experiences with a writing class and an additional course in their major, I found myself wondering about my students, those brand new to the university environment: how did they apply literacy strategies during their first term as college students?

The more I casually observed my students, the more curious I became to understand the apparent disconnect between talents and often lackluster grades. In writing conferences with students who could think, discuss, and write in such sophisticated ways, they consistently expressed their hopes "to at least get a D" in some other course class. I could not understand why they could be so expressive and perceptive in my classroom and not be the same elsewhere. The "evidence" seemed to point toward student views of literacy and literacy expectations.

In order to understand students' literacy practices as they enter their new academic environment, this study focuses on the first of two required first-year composition courses (English 1101) and one additional three-credit core course. My major questions have become three:

- How do students new to the Georgia Southern University environment respond to the academic literacy expectations in various classes?

- How do these students perceive their own literacy competence?
- What are Georgia Southern's literacy expectations and assumptions for first-term students?

From these queries come sub-questions, which focus the major questions:

- What literacy strategies do first-term, traditionally aged students draw upon to try to understand or assimilate the particular course (discourse) demands of the required Composition 1 (English 1101) and their other core courses?
- Are students aware that they use literacy strategies in each college class?
- What literacy expectations do teachers in core classes convey to their students?

Significance of the Study

First and foremost, the significance of this research is to put Georgia Southern faces to some of the statistics that faculty are given each year. For instance, I wanted to hear and see the students' reasons for keeping or losing the state's HOPE Scholarship, which is tied to maintaining a 3.0 GPA or higher and assumes that high school and college expectations for academic success are similar. These students' stories will serve as specific illustrations of various literacy and student development theories. Since research is "cumulative, comparative, cooperative" (Hymes, 1980, p.124), my study should be useful to Georgia Southern and other universities as we continue to find ways to improve

student learning and retention. The more we can learn about making our students academically successful, the more we can help them become so.

If we know what successful students do to adapt their literacy practices to their new academic environment at Georgia Southern, we should be able to offer workshops for a broader range of new students and for faculty who teach core courses. Within the Department of Writing & Linguistics, my research should serve a useful purpose with discussions and planning first year composition procedures. What I have observed in my study should also provide tangible information for more discussion at the department-sponsored spring conference, SSFYC (Student Success in First-year Composition), which invites high school and college English teachers to talk about student literacy development and university course demands. As a classroom teacher whose students are not so different from other college students across the nation, I will include additional activities and discussions in assigned courses as a result of the findings from the study.

University Context

A description of Statesboro and the university will help the reader situate the students and this study. Located in rural southeast Georgia, Statesboro has been an agricultural community since the mid-1800s, starting in cotton and expanding into forestry, tobacco, and peanut crops. This city of 25,000 is also home to several industries such as a Walmart distribution center and Briggs and Stratton; it also provides post-secondary degrees and certification programs at Ogeechee Technical College and Georgia Southern University. Since 1906,

Georgia Southern has been an undergraduate institution, from its beginnings as an agricultural and technical institution to normal school to comprehensive university status in 1996, though it offers masters degrees and, in education, a Specialist (6-yr degree) and two doctoral degrees. Georgia Southern is home to urban and suburban Atlanta-area (180 miles northwest) and rural Statesboro-area (within a 60-minute drive) students on its 26-acre campus.

One of Georgia Southern's mission statements is "teaching first." University administrators encourage faculty to maintain and enhance their teaching practices. Scholarship and service, for the most part, are expected to have a direct influence on teaching. For instance, when faculty apply for institutional Faculty Development or Faculty Service funding, the applicants must explain how their students will be impacted if awarded the grants. With the exception of some science labs, faculty, not graduate assistants, teach all courses. Students are taught by the teacher they register for, one of the major influences on their choosing Georgia Southern. The average ratio of student to faculty for Fall 2004 was 20:1, another major attraction for students (and the faculty).

In the 2004 Fall Semester 16,100 students were enrolled at the university. Of the 5,055 designated freshmen 2,807 were labeled "beginning," meaning no previous college course credit had been earned. These beginners had a 3.08 high school average, with a 1080 SAT Composite Average (http://services.georgiasouthern.edu/osra/student/fallsum.htm 2005). According to the Georgia Southern Fact Book 2004-2005, the state composite average was

987; the university system 1042; the national 1026. The reported freshmen GPA for fall term was 2.39. These numbers and classroom environment descriptions suggest to the general public that GSU delivers a quality education to well-prepared students.

With few exceptions, full-time freshmen must take 12 to 18 hours within the five core areas. Area A provides the university system's required "Essential Skills" courses: two sequenced composition courses, English 1101 and 1102, and one math course from a choice of five. Because Math and English 1101 represent the "Essential Skills" necessary for foundational understanding for higher levels of other coursework at the university, students must earn a minimum of "C" to be considered successful and thus allowed to take the second English (1102) and additional math courses. Area B focuses on World History; Area C the Humanities; Area D Science, Mathematics, and Technology; Area E the Social Sciences. Two physical education classes, Healthful Living, and Orientation round out the core. Fulfilling these areas earns students 47 credit hours towards graduation.

Purpose

Behind all of the statistics stated above are real people. These behind-the-numbers students are my interest. To learn more about the academic literacy perceptions and expectations, I conducted case study research during the fall semester of 2004, following nine first-term students to their English 1101 and one additional required core course in order to learn more about the literacy expectations at Georgia Southern University, particularly from the students'

perspectives. Five times, I sat in 13 different classrooms over 12 weeks of the semester to observe teachers, students, and their interactions. In addition, I conducted two group interviews and two individual interviews with each student participant, one meeting with each teacher, and gathered writing samples from both of the students' classes in which I observed.

By the time the term ended, the nine volunteer students for the study became five. In order to include these subjects in my dissertation, I needed to have their written samples (one English 1101 paper with teacher comments and two to three pages of notes taken in the second core course) as well as my observations and interviews. Four of the students never turned in this information. From all of these artifacts describing the final five students and their classes, I have attempted to make sense of how new college students use their literacy strategies in their various classroom environments.

Too often we college teachers have labeled students who come to us "unprepared" as students who are "unable." However, this study reveals that some of the problems lie in how or when or why Georgia Southern students might not apply a particular literacy strategy rather than that they *can't* apply it.

Definitions

Particular vocabulary needs defining for this study. "Literacy" is used to denote the more general understanding of the term: to read and write for communication. Composition scholar Ann Berthoff (1990) has a similar yet more complicated definition that also influences "literacy" in a general sense: "the relationship of reading and writing to each other and to language" (p. 115).

“Academic” or “school” literacy, a phrase often heard in a university setting, will be used whenever particular course expectations demand specific ways of communicating through vocabulary and structures of written and spoken communication. Linguist James Paul Gee (1989) explains this type of literacy as “the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse” (pp. 5-25). Home language represents the primary Discourse (the capital “D” is Gee’s); any discourse outside of that home language becomes Gee’s “secondary Discourse,” which shares Chiseri-Strater’s (1991) definition of “the reading, writing, talking, and thinking patterns of the discipline” (p.144). “Literacy strategies” or “literacy practices” represents the activities of the students as they read, wrote, and spoke in the classroom setting.

Mixed in numerous studies and in most conversations with colleagues is the idea of “critical thinking,” another concept that we tacitly know but have difficulty defining succinctly, so this dissertation relies on the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction (2005) for a reliable definition: “that mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them“ (www.criticalthinking.org). When we grade an essay or give a test, we expect students to ”skillfully take charge” of the content. Through this case study, the evidence will illustrate what kind of “taking charge” and “imposing of intellectual standards” the five students practiced. Stephens & Brown’s (2000) research on

“content literacy,” which is “most often defined as using reading and writing as a tool for learning subject matter,” reflects this same notion of critical thinking (p. 2).

Though “first-year” represents the traditional college freshmen who have earned less than 30 credit hours, the phrase “first-term” student is more appropriate here since this research includes only those traditionally aged students brand new to the classroom environment with no college course experience before fall 2004.

Chapters Overview

In order to help readers follow this study, the outline below briefly overviews the next sections:

Chapter 2 discusses the scholarship that influenced this literacy case study. The research concerning academic literacy--specifically reading, writing theories, and college student development theories--highlights, supports, or sometimes challenges the case study’s research findings.

Chapter 3 contains the methodology for the study. Within it are the procedures for gathering and analyzing data from the participants.

Chapter 4 focuses on the five students’ stories. This section contains descriptions of the course environments along with the students’ literacy strategies. The interviews combined with observations create the context for the participants’ thoughts and actions reported within.

Chapter 5 analyzes the emergent patterns of literacy strategies found among the five student participants.

Chapter 6 explores the implications of situations discussed within these pages and then invites ideas for further study as well as.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"How we use an idea, how it invites us to put it into practice, will tell us best what the significance of the idea is." (Ann Berthoff, 1990)

Most people, even from outside of academia, would admit that the term "literacy" is a broad one; few can agree on one specific definition. Usually the idea of practicing reading, writing, and communicating with language begins to define academic or school literacy. Linguist James Paul Gee (1989) adds a layer to that explanation: when we speak of school literacy, we are expecting students to be practicing literacy that Gee labels as secondary Discourse, one other than the primary Discourse we learn at home, in order to create an identity that meets education's literacy expectations. Deborah Brandt (1998) calls these institutions that demand particular literacy practices "sponsors" who seem to determine the types of literate people welcomed in to the particular literate discourse community. Brian Street (1993) echoes this sentiment, describing literacy practices as "aspects not only of 'culture' but also of power structures" (in Cushman, 2001, p. 434). The students who come to college must make a transition from their home discourse and high school literacy practices if they want to succeed--or be accepted--in the university culture.

This idea of literacy's socially constructed learning figures large in the field of composition. Bizzell (1992) and Perry (1970) warn of the value-laden pressures embedded in our writing classrooms as we choose reading materials and writing assignments while trying "to put students in touch with conventional

means of joining the group" (Bizzell, p. 142). With a skeptical view of academic approaches to literacy, Gerald Graff (2003) berates institutions due to the "ways in which schools and colleges . . . reinforce cluelessness and . . . perpetuate the misconception that the life of the mind is a secret society for which only an elite few qualify" (p. 1). His call to invite the students into academia parallels political activist Paulo Freire's (1970) attempts to help illiterate Brazilian villagers become more literate through conscientization in order to have more control over their lives. Student-centered learning, with Freire's influence, has become an American trend in education where students are expected to reflect on their learning through discussions, teacher conferences, and written responses that connect personal associations to the course's subject matter. Barbara Mellix (1997) reflects on her own struggle for identity, having to shift from her home literacy and discourse practices to the academic expectations in her writing, which took years before becoming comfortable and in control of both worlds. Her experience brings us back to Gee's idea that discourses become our identity kit, a literate identity that our students seek, whether they know it or not, during their first term at college. Students' confidence and self-awareness affect their determination to learn or practice in an academic environment (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Svinicki, 2005), and their competence in the secondary Discourse at the university clearly influences identity.

Terms such as "powerful literacy" (Finn, 1999) or critical literacy or critical thinking seem to be interchanged so often that many of us must pause to consider what these terms mean and how they differ, if at all, from the others in

our daily conversations about academic literacy. In her study, Chiseri-Strater (1991) asserts that these academic literacy practices or norms force students to repress identities in order to be judged (via grades) as competent in the discourse of the institution: “the reading, writing, talking, and thinking patterns of the discipline” (p. 144). While students in Chiseri-Strater’s study accepted the norms of their classrooms, some minority students in Finn’s study did not; instead, their cultural identities often conflicted with school expectations, resulting in these students’ refusal to assimilate school cultural norms. As faculty our understanding of the discourse community to which we belong is so ingrained in our thinking patterns that we often don’t recognize when our students lack or are struggling with this set of skills for making meaning. Because we don’t understand our students’ situations, we often unintentionally prevent them from learning more quickly how to acquire competency in our discourse communities.

In spite of various national reports (National Commission on Writing, 2005; National Governors’ Association, 2005; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2005) on high school students’ inadequate reading and writing performance, most college faculty assume that their students should have acquired the reading and writing practices necessary for automatic participation in the classroom. Usually, the composition classrooms (at the entry-level year) include practice in Chiseri-Strater’s literacy norms through talking and peer work during prewriting and drafting stages of writing assignments, so first-term collegians immediately begin to learn the literacy practices within that composition community. However, the “thinking patterns of the discipline,”

particularly in the core courses outside of the composition class, such as Economics 2105, Biology 1130, and Music Appreciation, are what most students have difficulty with and what much of this study addresses.

I have situated the literature into two distinct categories within which academic literacy can be visualized. The first section concerns reading and writing theories since they relate and explain much of what determines academic literacy norms. The second category, cognitive development theory, is so tightly enmeshed with literacy development that it must have a substantial place in this dissertation as well.

Writing Theories

Because of the nature of the discipline, composition classrooms most often, most consistently, and most explicitly reinforce literacy practices. In freshmen English classes (at Georgia Southern these courses are English 1101 and 1102), students usually report that, for the first time, they have experienced composing in genres besides five-paragraph essays. Through genres, students learn to consider audience and purpose, which influence the structure or organization of information as well as drive the word choice for each composition. Carroll (2002) has found that students in her study “learn[ed] to write differently—to produce new, more complicated texts, addressing challenging topics with greater depth and complexity” (p. xii). Carroll’s idea that students write differently not necessarily better illustrates the types of academic literacy expectations that students experience in their transition to the university. As Moffett (1983) reminded us all those years ago, writing an editorial requires different thinking

and organizational strategies than writing a feature article or a poem does. Practicing the act of composing those specific forms and language choices immerses students into the literacy "as a way of being and acting in the world, socially and rhetorically" (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 14). In the past twenty years, the research on teaching writing has influenced how most composition teachers help students practice or learn literacy strategies necessary to make the difficult transition to literacy norm expectations.

Paralleling Gerald Graff's (2003) assertion, Bartholomae (1997) has insisted that we make visible the university's expectations. By helping students write in an academic voice, we invite them in to the academic community, easing their transition experience. Likewise, Owen (2001) has termed this first-year writing classroom environment as a "filter" where students can attain "a growing sense of sustainable awareness to the goals implicit within their chosen majors" (p. 29). The filter, in Lemke's (1995) view, helps students "see the worlds our communities teach us how to see" (p. 4). In Sternglass's (1997) longitudinal study with basic writers, she has discovered that:

> only through writing, perhaps through the condensation and analysis of classroom notes or through writing of drafts of papers that required them to integrate theory with evidence, did they achieve the insights that moved them to complex reasoning about the topic under consideration. (p. 295)

Experiences in my teaching career suggest that Sternglass's observations describe regularly admitted students as well. The depth of thought expected in college composition assignments causes difficulty for most students, especially in

their early attempts at expressing their ideas. Emig's (1983) research also supports Sternglass's idea that writing is a tool for learning: "writing . . . connects the three major tenses of our experience to meaning making [the past, present, and future]" because it is recursive (p. 129). Frank Smith (1994) has reinforced this notion in his explanation that we don't know what we have learned about writing until we do the act of composing (p. 194), and studying college students' writing helps researchers better understand the recursive relationship between composing and how students learn (Sommers, 2004, p. 146).

Frank Smith (1994) has also told us, "learning to write begins . . . with *seeing oneself* as a writer, doing the things writers do, and thinking the way writers think. This is a matter of identity, not of instruction or effort, even of desire to learn" (p. 180). According to Nancy Sommers (2004) in her Harvard study, teaching writing must allow students to "write into expertise." As students learn to become experts, they begin to think like writers. Sommers' research about students' perceptions of the significance of writing in their college careers is similar to Leigh Ann Carroll (2002) at Pepperdine and Sternglass (1997) at City College. All three studies illustrate a wide range of students demonstrating similar perceptions. In these research cases, students show how "writing appears both to help [them] remember hard facts and to simultaneously assist them in seeing the relationships among the facts and ideas, thus facilitating the practice of analysis" (Sternglass, p. 30).

Reading Theories

In the same way that college composition assignments ask students to write in a variety of genres, so do reading assignments. Students must recognize the organization or genre of any reading in order to make sense of the material. Textbook writers and the faculty who use the texts in their courses expect students to automatically discern the patterns used to organize information within the chapters and headings—is it presented in cause/effect, argument, problem-solution, or narrative structure? When students enter the university, they also need to begin acquiring the language of each discourse field. In order to make meaning for themselves, students must call on specific literacy strategies to read "into expertise" in the same way Sommers has asserted for writing. If educators don't "help kids get the skills they need to understand and learn about the content we . . . . care about" (Tovani, 2004, p. 7), students often become frustrated with their ineffective efforts and begin to lose control of their learning. This frustration will be illustrated in discussions about Gil and Tristan's literacy practices (Ch. 5).

In addition, even though they perceived themselves as competent readers, Gil, Tristan, and Philip often did not know how to adjust to new demands within the academic literacy domain. Often, these students reported that they had competent reading ability but did not seem to enjoy reading or do much more of it than was required in the school setting. Berthoff (1990) has told us that "the chief reason for reading substantial, complex prose---and reading it slowly---is that it provides opportunities for developing certain habits of questioning, of looking and

looking again, and for practicing certain procedures for auditing meanings which are in competition" (p. 110). Jeanne Henry (1995) agrees in part with the premise of reading slowly, yet "only practice and experience make students proficient and insightful readers. But neither teachers nor students have the luxury of the time this takes" (xvii). Students taking five courses in a sixteen week semester have little time or guidance for developing the habits Berthoff recognizes as essential for learning. Keith Gilyard (1996) has maintained that the type of thinking and practice for proficiency are what most college students need to become "arrogant readers," but few have been shown how to do so before or during their first term in college. The normal weekly vocabulary and chapter tests that have review days along with detailed study guides in the high school classroom do not model arrogance in learners; they invite dependence and passive learning. As Clinton (2002) reports, "When you talk to high school teachers you'll mostly hear about a different kind of illiteracy . . . The kids in the back row can read the words, but not the content" (p. L8). When students have been accustomed to memorizing information and then repeating it on their tests, it is no wonder that just two months after their senior year they are having difficulty with managing college reading and writing assignments.

The ideas of the reading researchers just mentioned also apply for note-taking and text marking skills. Nist & Kirby (1989), reporting on the text marking habits of college students, call for students to be explicitly taught how to take notes since the patterns they studied revealed no consistent or effective use of the markings or marginal comments made. One of the researchers' convincing

reasons for the explicit nature of teaching note-taking is that faculty often assume students were shown in high school, but Nist & Kirby remind us that public school officials prohibit any writing in the texts since they have to be reused; consequently, in a matter of weeks, high school seniors with no practice in text-marking as a way of note-taking come to college and are expected to be proficient in this skill (p. 336).

Not surprising, then, most college students have not yet acquired the reading strategies necessary for comprehending at levels desired by their instructors. Along with writing strategies, Eric Hobson (2004) has reminded us that because first-term college students are novices at higher order literacy practices, professors need to scaffold reading activities in order to help them move towards expected proficiency that is usually equated with critical thinking skills. Likewise, Karen Tankersly (2003) has maintained that “reading and writing activities build reading and thinking skills in students and go hand in hand to increase student performance in reading” (p. 136). To illustrate such an activity for improved reading skill, Falk-Ross (Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002) has found that giving students “an authentic reason to read text . . . to answer a question or solve a problem . . . imposes a need for effective ways to read.” As Clinton’s (2002) report has made clear, we assume reading has been mastered in elementary school levels, but the reality is that reading skills, like writing skills, need constant practice for continual development of expertise.

Cognitive Theories

Researchers from reading, writing, and cognitive science remind us that academic literacy acquisition cannot not be completed in a semester or even a year. Real learning of any kind takes place over time (Svinicki, 2005; Sommers, 2004; Carroll, 2002; Russell, 2002; Henry, 1995). Lynch & Wolcott (2001) maintain that “teachers who do not understand how thinking skills develop may overestimate student skills and assign coursework that is unreasonably complex.” When assignments seem too complicated, many students will choose to wait for the teacher to explain rather than attempt work on their own. Anthropologist Rebekah Nathan (2005) experienced the life of a college freshman and reports additional student reactions to coursework that students perceive is unreasonable. Often, when teachers expect students to catch on quickly, they often become frustrated with their students when it doesn’t happen, not realizing that explicit teaching could help the novices make the shift to higher literacy development levels much quicker. Kutz, Groden, & Zamel (1993) report that “language acquisition is a good model for what we are seeking to understand about learning and teaching” in first-year writing classrooms (p. 8). Academic literacy acquisition, like language acquisition, requires in-context use of words to facilitate mastery. Students need time to learn vocabulary specific to particular courses of study, and they also need to practice using the vocabulary and thinking patterns of the content area. Not only must they memorize new language and new concepts in their classes; they are expected to store the information in

long term memory, not just for the duration of the exam. Most students are not accustomed to this academic literacy expectation.

Because “student change implies growth, which implies learning, which entails a new status” (p. 34), Richard Haswell (1991) has claimed that “we are not teachers of writing. We are teachers of this eighteen-year-old, writing” (p. 1). This new status suggests the psychological shifts affecting first-term students as they make the transition from high school to college students. As discussed in the previous section, recent high school graduates come to college with twelve years of habits of mind developed through their compulsory education. Once at the university, most faculty assume that students want to learn and do well, and, as part of that desire, faculty also expect students to do all the assigned work in and out of class, come to class regularly, and seek help when they need it. The implication is that students will apply their literacy strategies automatically from course to course. However, some of the students, though motivated, don’t know how to channel that desire. If they try to read a text and their concentration or understanding begins to drift, they don’t have strategies to deal with those difficulties and often give up. Instead, they rely on their teachers to explain all of the answers and strategies, creating an unintentional barrier (“I’m not smart enough to talk to the professor” or “The professor will think I’m an idiot if I ask this.”) and influencing how students adapt or reject essential literacy practices. Consequently, in addition to reading and writing practice, students’ psychological and emotional adjustments affect their literacy development (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Svinicki, 2005; Piscatelli, 2004).

Theorists in college student development explain that the difficulties with adjustment have more to do with cognitive shifts or development than with a lack of literacy skills. Similar to Smith's suggestion that one's identity influences literacy, Perry (1970) explains that a student:

> undertakes to affirm his own commitments in a world of contingent knowledge and relative values. The intervening forms and transitions in the scheme outline the major steps through which the person . . . appears to extend his power to make meaning in successive confrontations with diversity. (p. 3)

Diversity in the academic setting can include not only the typical sense of ethnic or class diversity but also the diversity of academic expectations and teaching styles within and among the courses taken during one's college career. English teachers often have student conferences and conduct small group activities; science and history classes might contain 200 or more students and require power point delivery of the information as well as independent reading and note-taking to cover all the course material. Reconciling those diverse practices for course readings and lectures creates additional levels of learning that students must adjust to as best they can. Thirty years after Perry's study, The National Research Council (2001) has reported a similar observation: "learners actively construct their understanding by trying to connect new information with their prior knowledge" (p. 62). Kegan (1982) has explained this phenomenon best: "much of present-day stress and psychological description is developmental, in the sense that it is related to the process of growth, change, and transition" (p. 261).

For twelve years, most students have been accustomed to familiar teachers, classroom environments, and learning styles that seemingly overnight have changed when they step into the university setting. Baxter Magolda (1999) has also recognized the developmental demands: “students use particular meaning-making structures until they both encounter and receive assistance in resolving discrepancies between experience and those structures . . . they use the one [structure] they have learned until it no longer works effectively” (p. 63). These novices must use literacy strategies from high school experiences to become an expert as quickly as they can, but part of their difficulty in becoming proficient seems to lie in how they organize the knowledge they have. Experts in the content areas “organize this knowledge in ways that make it more retrievable and useful” (p. 72) while novices in college have yet to acquire the knowledge, let alone organize and retrieve the information.

First-year experience research reminds us that even if students have the tools for learning in this new world of the university, they also must have the “will” to learn (Vanderstoep & Pintrich, 2003, p.4). The motivation is closely linked to self image, where “the relationship between the individual and the environment is a transactive one” (Eisner, 1994, p.47; Cashen, 1979). Motivational research connects self image with goal setting: “Achievement goal orientation . . . refers to the fact that the type of goal toward which a person is working has a tremendous impact on how they (sic) pursue the goal” (Svinicki, 2005). If students are driven to “persist in the face of difficulty and frustration . . . take risks and try things that they don’t already know how to do,” they are classified as mastery-oriented,

Svinicki explains. If they are less persistent to avoid appearing incompetent, these students are identified as performance-oriented. Mastery-oriented students want to make the information or task their own while the performance types usually are motivated for the grade alone, so they rely on short term memory.

Though at first glance one would not associate time management with literacy practices, motivation to learn influences decisions. Goal setting, according to Svinicki, influences if and how long a student chooses to study to learn or to get a grade. The thinking patterns, through practice, will become second nature if practiced consistently. The more a student persists at developing effective literacy practices (like daily reading and writing), the more these habits of mind will shift from learning the skill---consciously making the choice to act---to the acquisition stage where the act becomes automatic.

Summary

Regardless of the field of study, reading, writing, and thinking patterns must be modeled and practiced regularly before many first-term students can rise to the university's expectations: "experiences that give students multiple opportunities to use all their language processes to interact with and internalize new concepts, ideas, and information increase interest and improve learning" (Stephens & Brown, 2000, p. 4). The literature reviewed in this section indicates the obvious: literacy studies are complicated and require the expertise found in writing and reading theories, not one or the other, and cognitive development theories.

In particular, the scholarship cited in this section must be considered simultaneously in order to better understand what happens to the first-term students at Georgia Southern. Each of my research questions needs the variety of perspectives offered in these theories:

- How do students new to the Georgia Southern University environment respond to the academic literacy expectations in various classes?
- How do these students perceive their own literacy competence?
- What are Georgia Southern's literacy expectations and assumptions for first-term students?

As I analyzed my observations and interviews with the students in this study, I could not consider how they approached their writing assignments without also including what they were reading and how they were reading the materials related to their writing assignments and their note-taking. Moreover, as they talked about their strategies in the classroom, I had to be aware of cognitive theories that could help explain why any particular student chose to take risks or resist doing so.

The theorists cited here offer insightful information about literacy and learning, but most of them narrow their discussions to either writing theory or reading theory with some mention of learning theory as well. This dissertation, by embracing all three, invites a more balanced analysis of student literacy practices during their first term.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"Research methods are not neutral tools; they embody assumptions about causation and control, about how knowledge is acquired, and about the researcher's relationship to what is being studied." (Bissex, 1987)

The contextual framework for this study involves both the student actions and expectations along with those of the university through its faculty members' actions and expectations of their students. This section will discuss participant selection as well as data collection of interviews, observations, and textual evaluation.

Colleagues from the Writing & Linguistics Department were solicited first for finding student volunteers in English 1101, the first of two required writing courses for all students, as well as for using the composition classroom as a traditional context within which literacy skills are explicitly taught. Once the student volunteers were identified, their schedules provided a second course for observation. This second course served to illustrate more reading-focused literacy expectations whereas the English 1101 emphasized writing.

Group interviews allowed the students to hear what peers were thinking and compare those views with their own; then, in the individual interviews the students articulated their thoughts and often discussed personal literacy skills that they may not have felt comfortable sharing in front of their peers. Classroom observations allowed the researcher to compare students' literacy practices to their perceptions revealed during the interviews. Writing samples of essay drafts from English 1101 and notes from one additional course revealed some of the

teachers' expectations for the course content. Combined, these three types of data collection provided the information for triangulation, which revealed several emergent patterns of literacy learning and practices of first-term college students.

Selecting the Volunteers

In the spring of 2004, I had emailed several of my colleagues in the Writing & Linguistics Department where I teach and asked if they would be willing to let me use their Fall 2004 English 1101 classes to recruit students for my study and then to observe those volunteers as they interacted in those same English classes during that fall semester. Recruiting began on the first day of classes, and with four teachers saying yes, I felt sure that by week's end I would find enough student volunteers to carry out my case study. Because rapport between the student volunteers and me would be critical for our one-on-one interviews, I used purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70) in order to work with a few teachers, at least, who knew me and would trust my sitting in their classes several times in the term. By the end of the week I had nine volunteers, six females and three males.

Selecting the Second Core Course

At the end of each day of recruiting and signing of permission forms (See Appendix 1), I added the volunteers' names and their class schedules to my spreadsheet in order to make a logistical plan. In thinking through the best strategy for selecting a second class, many possibilities arose. Before the choosing, however, I had to get the permission of the instructors. I emailed each teacher on the students' schedules who was teaching a 3-credit core class.

Along with my brief introduction, I sent an attachment that summarized my study and its goals (See Appendix 2). I also invited them to ask additional questions; I would call or come by for discussion if they desired.

I had not anticipated how slowly the instructors would respond to my queries. Fortunately, by Tuesday of Week 2, I had permission from every volunteer's second core teacher and could make the first of three observations in my allotted time: each class, once per week, for three consecutive weeks.

Conducting the Observations

Table 1 shows how, with nine volunteers, I conducted thirteen hours of weekly class observations in Weeks 2-4 and Weeks 10-11. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I observed Economics at 9:00, English at 10:00, Psychology at 11:00, Calculus at 12:00, Trigonometry at 1:00, two different English 1101 sections at 2:00, and Art in Life at 3:30. Tuesdays and Thursdays I visited English 1101 or Economics at 9:30, Music Appreciation at 11:00, and English 1101 at 2:00. I also emailed the students one to two days ahead of time to let them know which day I wanted to come to observe.

Table 1

Observation Schedule

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.
9-9:50	ECON	ENG 1101	ECON	ENG 1101	ECON
10-10:50	ENG 1101		ENG 1101		ENG 1101
11-11:50	PSYC	MUSC	PSYC	MUSC	PSYC
12-12:50	CALC		CALC		CALC

1-1:50	TRIG		TRIG		TRIG
2-2:50	ENG 1101	ENG 1101	ENG 1101	ENG 1101	ENG 1101
3-3:50	ART		ART		ART

During the observed class period, I combined writing down any notes that teachers wrote on boards or screens with recording actions of the student volunteers as they took notes. In my descriptions of each student, I avoided physical description to maintain some amount of anonymity. Although I gave participants the option of choosing their pseudonyms, many forgot to do so and gave me permission to make one up or to use their real names. I chose to use pseudonyms. Little physical description depicts the teachers for the same reasons of anonymity.

One of the difficulties, however, was my enthusiasm as a researcher/learner. At times, I would find the course content information so interesting that I took notes for my benefit, having to remind myself to watch the student participant instead. Although this propensity could have turned into a major problem in my observation skills, I later found that my interest in the topics allowed me to be a stronger interviewer. My enthusiasm as well as my observations about the teacher, the students, even the classroom made the interviews feel more like a casual conversation, which in turn put the students at ease as they discussed their classroom habits as well as their attempts at doing homework and studying.

Another minor problem occurred on the rare occasion when a student skipped the class that I had come to observe. Because my time was limited, I

chose to stay in those classes and take notes that concentrated on the teachers' methods. I looked for habits in speaking or writing that might show how students could "read" the teacher. For instance, when an instructor repeated or explained concepts in more than one way, I knew that this information was important, so I wanted to see if the student also recognized the implied clues. I also noted the classroom environment that could very well affect a person's concentration: the temperature, smell, size of desks, arrangement of the room, the noise level competing with the teacher's voice. The environment was rich for any set of eyes and ears.

Conducting the Interviews

Group Interviews

My original plan was to meet with the entire group of students for the first interview. When I imagined six students volunteering, the logistics remained much more manageable, but when nine became the number, finding one day and time to meet was not possible, so I settled on two days. Another part of the logistics was deciding on a neutral place to meet. I worried that a residence hall might be too noisy and my office, though large, would be perceived as too connected with the university and my authority, so I arranged to meet at the library.

The first six who confirmed were the females, and we met on Sunday afternoon at 4:00 in the library. I did not want to make participants too nervous, so I passed out a sheet with the questions to allow them time to think. I also tried not to write too often, recording a word or phrase at the moment in order to keep

the conversation flowing. In addition, watching facial expressions and gestures helped me get a sense of each person as an individual. I wanted to see if they were eager to share information or if they preferred to wait and observe the others, for instance. My main purpose in the group interviews became more about creating a comfortable environment than conducting by-the-book data collection (Maxwell, 2005, p. 83).

I asked eight questions in random order:

1. What have people told you about what to expect from your college reading and writing assignments?
2. Do you believe what they have told you? Why or why not?
3. What do you see as your strengths as a student?
4. What do you see as your weaknesses?
5. Do you think your high school experience has prepared you for taking college-level work? Can you give me examples of why you think this way?
6. Have you visited any college classes before actually attending school?
7. Have you any family members who have already gone to college?
8. Do you have a job or plan to get one while taking classes?

My purpose for the questions was to help me get a sense of their confidence and experience as learners. Moreover, since emergent design invites discovery rather than mere confirmation of assumed results, I preferred to have more than I needed.

Even more important for this casual group meeting was the opportunity to set the context of my study through the questions that I asked. Many of the

questions would come up again in the individual interviews, so these first-time queries gave the volunteers time over the next few weeks to think about and become aware of their transition to college life. I did not want my research to be at their expense; I wanted it to benefit them as much as me. Since reflection often encourages learning, the interview questions throughout the semester could help the participants consider their literacy practices and perhaps more quickly be aware of and act upon improving their strategies.

On Monday, I met with the three males at 5:00 in the same place in the library and asked the same questions, following up with my checklist for bookkeeping information. Immediately after both meetings, I recorded their comments from the brief notations made on my paper. I emailed all volunteers a copy of my summarized account and encouraged them to make any corrections or additions to what we had discussed. No one sent me comments.

Like the initial group meeting, the mid-term dinner gathering was intended to be a relaxing time to become better acquainted. It was also to reward the volunteers for helping me. This meeting took place on Week 8, the week of mid-term exams and just days before the university's last day to drop a class without penalty. Because it was the half-way point in their first semester, as a teacher, I knew how stressful exam week was, and often students didn't eat well. The restaurant would give them as close to a home-cooked meal as I could find. Seven of the nine students showed up for the meal. I took the other two to lunch at a later date that fit into their schedules.

For this interview, I again chose not to use a tape recorder; I felt that building rapport was more important than getting exact words from each person. As with the earlier group meeting, I brought my set of questions that I wanted to ask, but this time I had emailed the students a copy ahead of time so that they could think about the questions if they remembered to check their emails in the days before the dinner. Below are the questions, which were not asked in any particular order:

- What differences, if any, do you see in high school and college teachers?
- What's the difference in the coursework (in class, the homework, the activities, technology, etc)?
- Is the reading load heavier or lighter than you expected? Is the type of reading what you expected? (Think all classes, not just English)
- Is the writing load more or less than expected? Is the type of writing what you expected? (Think all classes, not just English)
- Which high school class or teacher best prepared you for college work?
- What's the most difficult class? Why?
- What's the easiest class? Why?
- What's the most fun or interesting or enlightening class so far? Why?
- If the term ended right this minute, what would your overall GPA be? Higher or lower than you expected?
- After 7 weeks in school, what has been the best advice given by a teacher, family member, or friend about the academic expectations at college?
- What advice do you have for high school students (seniors in particular) who are planning on coming to college next term—if you knew you could honestly influence them (as an advisor or teacher or friend)?

- What kind of personal reading and/or writing are you doing this term (email? magazines? Websites, movie reviews, job applications, for example)?

Because we did not address all of the questions and because when asked some of the questions the students all started talking at once, I planned to ask the same questions during the second individual interviews. After the meeting, I paraphrased the major points in the conversation as closely as I could and sent the copies to the students that same evening. None sent any comments back; however, I knew that some had read the text since one person informed me that she couldn't pull up the attachment (I sent another copy immediately).

Individual Interviews

For the first one-on-one interviews scheduled in Weeks 5 and 6, I made reservations in the library in the same room where I had the Sunday afternoon group meeting. This arrangement worked for the first few students, but due to scheduling conflicts with the library, I decided to use my office. Although I worried a little about the student's discomfort, we had gotten to know each other during my observations, and during the few interviews that I held in the library, I sensed how at ease they were, so I didn't think the location change would affect the rapport we had built so far.

Since I had many questions to fit into my planned one-hour session, I sent copies to each volunteer at least three days before our scheduled meeting. I reminded them in the email that they didn't have to read the hand-out, that I realized they might be very busy with school work; I just wanted them to see that the questions were not designed to trick them or ask anything too personal. Most,

upon arrival, told me that they had read through the questions ahead of time. Before we began, I asked each student if they wanted to remain anonymous to their teachers involved in the study. All students said they did not care if their teachers knew or not. I explained that I wasn't going to volunteer the information, but I wanted to know how careful I needed to be about their identities. Within the first week of observations, I discovered that many of the students had told their teachers, at least their English professors, of their involvement in my study.

To make them aware that this situation was new for me as well, I found myself admitting to the students that I felt as if I were on an episode of *Law and Order* in the interrogation room. It was important to me to be a good listener, but also an active participant, so my honesty with the discomfort helped (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002, p. 374). We chuckled and then concentrated on the questions. The categories of questions covered note-taking, teaching styles, homework practices, classroom interaction, and self-assessment; however, because there are so many sub-questions, I have not embedded them in the text. (See Appendix 3)

As with the other interviews, I did not ask the information in a set order. I waited to see how the students began when they came into the session. As each meeting took place, I made sure that each student had a copy of the questions just in case he or she had not looked over them or had forgotten what I would ask and gave the volunteers a few minutes to review the handout before I started. Keeping a copy of the questions in front of me helped me make sure that I asked all questions to each student regardless of the order; I checked off the

areas as I completed the questions. I also tried to listen carefully to their explanations and descriptions so that I could clarify comments.

Often in the sessions I would tell stories to share my experiences as a teacher or as a student to help show the volunteers that I didn't have all the answers or that I wasn't a perfect student either. My rapport allowed me the status of an insider for many discussions. I also allowed the students to discuss any of their classes even though I would not be able to use that information in this study since some of those professors had not given me permission to use their courses. However, if a student felt frustrated when one of his or her professors did not conduct class in the most professional manner, I listened and tried to make suggestions to help the student work through the classroom situation. Being an insider required that I be available for any classroom discussion, not just for my own agenda (Maxwell, 2005, p. 85).

The second individual interview took place during Weeks 13 and 14, about three-fourths of the way through the term and slightly later than my original plan. However, it was still early enough to avoid increased stress on the students as the end of the semester drew closer (exams began a month later during Week 17). Most of the questions this time were similar to ones asked earlier in the term, but I also asked more detailed ones about high school literacy practices in order to understand what kind of habits of mind the volunteers may have been relying on or changing since coming to college.

At the end of the session, I reminded them that I was still willing to help them with any of the course papers if they wanted me to. Few took advantage of

the extra opportunity. Four sent me at least one draft of an English assignment, but the others never did. Some of them told me that they ran out of time before deadlines, so they relied on their roommates or friends to help. Many had also made appointments with their teachers.

Teacher Interviews

My original intention was to interview the teachers twice during the term, but this plan was not achievable. Although I could have easily conducted two with my Writing Department colleagues, it was much more difficult for those outside of my department. Because I had not anticipated the problems with locating and contacting teachers within the first week of classes in order to get their permission to conduct the study and then to begin observing, I could not arrange for the first interview until several weeks into the term.

It was Week 10, in October, before I managed to confirm a few of the teacher interviews with those in other departments. Along with my electronic request to arrange a meeting, I sent a copy of the study's research questions and my purpose for meeting with them (See Appendix 4). I wanted the professors to understand my perspective and also to assure them that I was not judging their performance in any way.

I took the four Writing & Linguistics instructors to lunch at various times early in the term. Each of them typed and emailed as attachments responses to the questions, so our lunches were much more informal. During Week 10, I took both Economics professors on separate occasions to lunch to have our conversation. The trigonometry teacher, a former colleague of mine when we

both worked in the Learning Support Department at Georgia Southern, also took up my offer to meet for lunch. During the following semester, the Music Appreciation and Biology teachers also met with me in their offices, and the Calculus teacher met with me in the lobby of the College of Information Technology building. Each evening after our meetings, I typed up my recollection of their responses to my set of questions and sent them to each person to make comments, edit, or add any information they felt necessary. Four of them responded to my summaries, but they merely added or clarified information. None of them asked me to remove any wording. Three expressed interest in keeping in touch and perhaps having coffee or lunch again some time since meeting colleagues outside of their own departments was a difficult task.

Analysis

Transcribing

Usually, I transcribed my observations on the same day of my visits since the notes were less time consuming; however, I transcribed the interviews on the weekends when I had more time to devote to listening to the taped discussions. Because my analysis does not focus on the exact discourse patterns of the students, I did not include symbols for pauses, overlaps in conversation, and the like. I did, however, carefully record the students' words including the "like" phrases and slang such as "gonna" and "cuz" to help capture the voice of the student: "The validity of an analysis is not a matter of how detailed one's transcript is. It is a matter of how the transcript works together with all the other elements of the analysis to create a 'trustworthy' analysis" (Gee, 1999, pp.88-89).

After completing the transcriptions, I sent each student a copy via email. Only one student commented, and his response was meant to clarify my observation. The rest of the students did not ask for changes. When two volunteers asked if I wanted any grammar and punctuation help, I knew that most had probably read the transcripts. When the faculty responded, as I explained earlier in this chapter, they added clarifying details or filled in when I had marked that I was confused about something mentioned during our conversations. No one suggested omitting anything I had paraphrased.

Coding and Contextualizing

Using the constant comparison method to construct a grounded theoretical base, I analyzed data collected from my interviews and observations and designed a simple color-coding for the patterns emerging (Maxwell, 2005; Erlandson, 1993). Green highlighter captured the institutional expectations, such as what teachers told me or what I observed them doing in the classroom. Blue indicated students' perceptions about their literacy practices, what they told me they did or thought. Pink illustrated the students' activities during class: note-taking, talking, looking around. Orange helped me locate information students gave me about their pre-college experiences, from their school experiences to family experiences involving literacy norms. I used yellow for the descriptions of the classroom environment, the room temperature or design, for example. Using colors to identify any patterns was my attempt to "construe . . . modes of expression" conveyed by the volunteers (Geertz, 1983, p. 70).

With the course syllabi, I used the simple “I” for implied expectations of teacher or institution and “E” for explicit when written or vocal instructions came from text or teacher. Notes I took during observations could have teacher comments implying or illustrating expectations, so I noted those as well with “I” or “E.” In addition, when student writing samples had teacher comments on them, I noted the implied or explicit instructions as well. If students made notes beyond the word-for-word comments of the teacher, I tried to determine the students’ intentions behind those notations: was there a cue for “test question” or a reference to the course reading, for instance.

On nearly a daily basis, I also reflected in my journal to help me note emergent patterns or develop more questions for exploration as well as add to the audit trail (Erlandson, 1993). Some of these observations that become “cooked notes” have become part of this text as well (Hubbard & Power, 1993, p. 168).

Triangulating the Data

By comparing what students said and did in the classroom with what teachers of those students said and did and then allowing this data to be shared with my participants for any additional clarification, I allowed the triangulation to “converge” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 139), allowing my data to be considered valid. Although nine students participated in the observations and interviews, only five met all the requirements for being included in the analysis. Four of the volunteers did not give me samples of their writing, so their experiences could not be part of this study. The combination of artifacts also allowed me to use “multiple sets of

eyes," as Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002, p. 99) explain it or as "multiple centers or points of view," according to Denzin (1997, p. 26), in order to build "a compelling case" (Hubbard & Power, p. 92).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the observations, interviews, written texts, and researcher's reflections allowed me to construct some theoretical implications that will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 4

THE STUDENT LENS

"It is not the texts as objects, nor the speech as verbal text, that makes meaning, but our activity in interacting with these, producing and interpreting them, that makes meaning." (Lemke, 1995)

The five students' experiences in this case study during fall semester 2004 reflect much of the theory described previously. Becoming more and more acquainted with each participant, I found myself constantly surprised by each participant's uniqueness. Just when I thought I had found the "type" of pattern and theory that would conveniently capture a particular student's literacy picture, he or she would say or do something completely outside of "typical" expectations. For instance, a talented, motivated learner might have some of the weakest study skills while another volunteer might display goal-oriented rather than mastery-oriented attitudes toward reading, yet this person might practice the persistence expected from a mastery-oriented student in a writing course (See Chapter 2, Svinicki).

They all adapted their literacy practices as they knew how on their own, and when new ways of meaning making were shown to them, each student tried to apply those strategies to one if not both of the courses observed. As a reminder to the reader, the "core" courses for all students at the university comprise five areas: Area A, labeled "Essential Skills, includes the two sequenced English courses of 1101 and 1102 as well as one of five math courses for a total of nine credit-hours; Area B focuses on four credit-hours of World History courses; Area C requires six Humanities credit-hours; Area D

contains 11 hours of Laboratory Science courses, Technology, and higher level Math courses; Area E contains 12 hours of Social Science, where Economics, American history, and Political Science are required and then student can choose one remaining elective from Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, or World Regional Geography. In this chapter, those courses within Areas A, C, D, and E that allow students to choose the content course (Biology versus Astronomy, for instance) have been labeled "limited required." This distinction sometimes affects student motivation in courses, so clarifying what students in this study have chosen to take versus what they were required to take will, perhaps, influence their perceptions and actions. Table 2 represents each student and the two courses involved in this study.

Table 2

Students' Courses and Teachers

Student	Course	Teacher	Course	Teacher
Stephanie	ENG 1101	E4	CALC	T6
Gil	ENG 1101	E1	ECON	T3
Tristan	ENG 1101	E1	ECON	T2
Philip	ENG 1101	E1	MUSC	T1
Renee	ENG 1101	E3	BIOL	T4

Stephanie's Classes

Transcripts of this student's interviews were the longest overall because when Stephanie and I talked, we talked with gusto. Her eyes always bright and looking directly at me in our conversations, Stephanie's enthusiasm about

learning kept her smiling most of the time. My questions somehow led us to our love of Harry Potter, to successful music majors out in the world, to sagas about her other classes or my stories about teaching. Her ease in conversation made her the most articulate of the students in my study. She often reflected on things she had read or done in class and had no difficulty recognizing or explaining the connections she saw; in fact, she seemed to enjoy doing so.

As a student in the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program (GTREP), Stephanie had high expectations for her academic success, and her engineering program courses at the university were time-consuming and rigid in scheduling. Certain courses are offered in particular semesters, so students in that program need to stay in sequence if they don't want to add semesters to get into a required course. Adding to her time demands was her membership in the marching band, which practiced every afternoon from 4:00 to 6:00. Her Calculus I class met in the classroom three times per week for fifty-five minutes, and then she had a once per week, two-hour lab. Chemistry I and Computing for Engineers classes also included two to three hour labs in addition to weekly classroom time. English, Health, Trombone class, and Orientation rounded out her twenty-one contact-hour weekly schedule.

Calculus I

Calculus I is a "limited required" course since it is listed in the college core, Area A, Essential Skills, but it is not the only choice for students. They can choose from Math 1101, a math modeling course; Math 1111, algebra; two versions of Trigonometry; or Calculus I, a 5 contact-hour class for 4 credits.

Usually, those students whose major requires Calculus will take Calculus I, which explains Stephanie's choice. Professor T6 assumed that his students had competent literacy skills: he required that they read their textbook daily in order to write out the word problems for calculation and articulate their questions in class or via email to the professor. He also assumed that these students had competence with technology since a two-hour weekly MAPLE computer lab was part of the course. Along with those assumptions, he expected his students to come to class, do all homework thoroughly in order to learn the material, ask questions about either the homework or the new concepts being introduced, and take notes each day. Students earned up to 560 points for homework, lab work, 3 tests, and a cumulative exam.

Though T6 reported that few students made appointments to see him, he tried to make time for review sessions since he understood that finding time between his schedule and his students' was a difficult task. In class, through heavy lecture and demonstration, he was enthusiastic and humorous on occasion. From his perspective, keeping his students attentive was important. For each class session, T6 solicited questions about the previous night's homework and worked out the problems on the board. Making statements and asking questions to the class were his major methods of instruction. As he introduced new concepts, he tried to demonstrate by solving three problems, allowing students time to see how it all worked before they began asking what T6 called "the why's."

On my walk back from an observation early in the term, I saw Stephanie riding her bike, her hair pulled back in a ponytail; she turned towards me wearing her warm smile. She reported an 89 on the first calculus exam and was angry with herself because she omitted a step in one problem, costing her the A. Because she seemed so secure, I was caught off guard a few weeks later when Stephanie said she was dropping Calculus. I had observed her in class; she knew the formulas and theories. She came on time, and she enjoyed the class. I couldn't understand it until she said, "I already have that AP credit. That's why I'm bored with it" (21 September 2004). During her summer orientation session at Georgia Southern, her advisor told engineering students that, regardless of their AP scores, they needed to take Calculus I. Stephanie said that she thought the requirement was in place to make sure that students had experience with Maple, Apple's version of Microsoft's Mat Lab. Because her Computers for Engineers course already included the Mat Lab, "it's really pointless . . . to do it [the Calculus 1 course]." That's why she did not complete all the steps to each homework problem, she explained; that's why she got a 30% one particular homework grade, the one before the first test on which she had earned the 89. With the demands of her schedule, she did not need to take up time with material she already knew and had credit for.

The extra time, she explained, could be used for Computing for Engineers: "We have a lab every Friday, and it's due by Thursday, which seems like a lot of time, but these labs take you, like, six hours, no joke" (21 September 2004). Part of her valuable time was also spent getting to the university lab:

> My dorm is a business dorm, so the lab doesn't have the MAT Lab on the computers cuz it's [MAT lab] for engineering. And there's only certain times that there's open lab, and I have band practice that conflicts with a lot of them.

Her hectic schedule created more than the average obstacles. However, knowing the Calculus 1 information so well also allowed Stephanie time to observe T6's teaching methods and confirm him as a good teacher:

> He'd give you the theory, the rule, and then he'd give you, like, three examples for every rule, and if you didn't get it the first time, and you kinda got it the second time, then you could get it the third time. . . . [Plus] He's really funny, which keeps you entertained, which makes you stay awake. His whole class stays awake. Have you noticed?"

I did. Combined with the bright, windowed room, his use of humor guaranteed student attention. Stephanie chose a seat almost dead-center in the room. Her routine seemed to be to get seated, pull out her materials, and then greet fellow students who were in most of her other classes as well. Much of the time, she kept her pencil on her notebook but didn't really record anything during class. When T6 performed his calculations on the board, Stephanie often used her calculator with her left hand; her pencil stayed in her right. When she wrote or watched and listened to the professor, she jiggled her right foot, always attentive.

On one occasion, I kidded Stephanie about her meticulously organized notebook. Trying not to be obvious in noting her classroom tactics, the first time I observed her in Calculus, my eyes widened with surprise: the notebook paper

holes were covered with reinforcers, and sections of the pages had various colored tabs with numbers written in pencil on them, flagging the shift in information. Seeing my expression, she leaned towards me and whispered that her music at home was arranged by type and then alphabetically. Were all engineering students like that? Not offended by jokes about her strategy, she explained her logic during our interview: “It helps me find things easier. If the teacher says we’re having a test over chapters 1, 2, and 4, I can go ‘chapter 1, here it is; this is what I need to study. Chapter 2, here it is. Chapter 4, skip over this, right here.’ Or sections 3.1 or 4.2.” Her actual notes on the page also have a strategy: “I always do it in outline format where I have a main topic and then I have basically everything under that topic that the teacher gives me.” Where did she get this training? She didn’t hesitate to tell me:

> My [high school] freshman year . . . We had world geography honors, and he did this for all of his classes. For his notes, we had to do what he called two-column notes. He says, “I’m gonna give you two topics; then you write that on the left, “ and on the right you write what he says about it so you can flip it over and study, and you know, you read what it says and think in your head what it is, and then you flip it over to see what it is. . . . And all of our teachers made us do flashcards. That was a biggy. (9 November 2004)

Even as far back as sixth grade her teachers tried to teach them note-taking skills:

> You have a title; that's where I get writing on every line from. You have a title and then a Roman numeral; you go to a sub whatever it is, and then you could go another sub-one, and go farther over, and that's where I get my note-taking from. We used to have to outline chapters all the time.

In spite of the seeming drudgery for her back then, the practice seemed to have stuck: Stephanie used every line of her notebook paper.

English 1101

Professor E4 wholeheartedly believed in her students and their potential to write effectively, reporting that her students were enthusiastic as well as good writers. She expected her students to do the reading and drafting assignments as well as take part in peer activities such as reports and peer review of paper drafts. Like all the college teachers reported to me, she assumed that her students read, write, and discuss any content in the course. On the required lab day each week, students usually performed word processing skills for drafts they were assigned rather than using technology in other ways. Attendance was mandatory though incremental penalties would not be issued until a student's sixth absence. They had four papers, including the final essay assignment, reading quizzes, and a group project to earn their course grade.

E4's methodology, then, included models of intended writing expectations, sometimes through sharing her own work and at other times using novels or former student writing to help the class see what they were being asked to do. Peer reviewed evaluation took place during class time, and teacher comments came on the graded draft, which was weighted as 2/3 content and 1/3 grammar

and mechanics. Often the discussions were heavily teacher-centered though students did not hesitate to ask questions or offer comments during these sessions. Through reading quizzes, students wrote short answer responses before discussion of the assigned texts took place. This variety of teaching and participation supports Tankersley's (2003) assertion that "reading and writing activities build reading and thinking skills in students and go hand in hand to increase student performance in reading" (p. 136).

This classroom was tightly packed with tables that seated two persons at each one. Built in the early 1970's, the physical size of the room was intended to accommodate about two dozen individual desks, not these rectangular pieces that offered ample writing room for each occupant but forced students to crawl under tables if the one spot left happened to be at the back part of the room. Once students were seated, anyone needing to find another place created an obstacle course. Consequently, every day was an adventure for finding a seat since the previous teacher may have grouped the tables in order to have class discussions where everyone could see each other; on other days, three rows of tables with a narrow gap between them allowed students to find their seats a bit easier, but it hampered the interactive environment that many teachers preferred. In addition to the unpredictable arrangement of tables and chairs was an equally inconsistent room temperature. Some days the humidity would be nauseating; the next day the temperature would be hovering at 68 degrees. On more than one occasion I found myself struggling to concentrate while my fingers went numb from the cold.

As I found my seat and waited for the teacher's arrival early in the term, students commented on the class so far: the topics are fun; she's easy to talk to. "I love this class," I heard several say. E4 encouraged creativity with her students' writing by inviting them to write in someone else's voice or use a variety of genres. What did Stephanie think was important to this teacher of writing?

> I think if you're just creative and just do it, she's fine with you. It's really an easy class. She's really laid back. She's not hard-core on "You can't do this in a paper, and you can't do that in a paper." You can just be yourself. And if you can be yourself and just put forth a little effort you'll be fine in class. (21 September 2004)

Her definition of "effort" seemed obvious even though she didn't give herself much credit as an effective reader and writer. For instance, in class one day when the teacher announced their assignment to write a cento poem (a poem comprised completely from the words used by an author of some text, in this case, Nick Hornby's *About a Boy*, one of the required novels in the course), Stephanie turned to me and whispered, "I can't write poetry." After the fact, however, she acknowledged how fun it was and that her effort sounded pretty good. She earned and 82 on the cover letter that accompanied the cento; in it she was to explain how she went about creating the poem (See Appendix E). E4's comments and evaluation relate to three areas: sentence level suggestions about word choice, development and explanations of ideas mentioned and not explained, and personal responses to Stephanie's real-life connection to the subject she chose.

In our final interview, she reported what she had learned about writing in a college English class:

> I learned how to fit in quoted bits of things and make it into your own sentence where it still flows with your sentence. It's really cool. It's like she says, "it's jazzy" or whatever. I'm gonna try to do that more. I like that style. (9 November 2004)

Stephanie wanted the jazziness in her writing; she liked hearing her own voice through the words and ideas. She quickly added, "and we weren't ever allowed to use 'you' or 'I,' any of those rules that [high school] will never let you use. So it's a lot more fun to be able to not sit around and think 'How can I use . . .' You can just kind of go; it's really nice to write what's in your head. Feels more like a story." Allowing her to use her own language gave Stephanie's voice a place in her writing.

It wasn't just the freedom of style in college English that Stephanie learned to appreciate. She benefited from the practice of multiple drafts, and her enthusiasm reflects her growing awareness of writing skills:

> My last paper I wrote . . . I went over it and started reading it, and then I printed it out, changed some things, deleted some things to make it a different style sentence. Cuz it's one of the things she said: one of my sentences was same, same, same. She tried to change 'em. She wrote notes on how to change them. . . so I try to do that. It's really cool. I read it, like, three or four times and make tons of changes and delete tons of things.

When I told her how beneficial it was for her to be able to recognize ways to change her own words, she agreed, telling me in excited tones,

> Sometimes you catch yourself as if you're writing, and maybe you said something in this paragraph, but you catch yourself saying it more, and it sounds repetitive. I've caught myself doing that sometimes.

During our second interview, her enthusiasm had grown: "I liked writing the last paper more than I like any of them. . . . I kinda tried to have fun with that and make it funny while I'm telling my job [at Adventure Awnings]." Stephanie felt confident enough in herself and her teacher to keep taking risks in her writing, even at the end of the term when most students, ever-aware of the grade at stake, play it safe. If anyone had merely overheard our conversation, she would assume that Stephanie was one of the talkative, animated students in E4's class, but nothing would be further from the reality. In some ways, Stephanie was invisible. She came every day, and she always chose to sit at one of the back tables. As with her Calculus class, she came prepared with books and pencil, but unless she was called on to read or speak---something I never witnessed in my five visits over the semester, this student just listened. Reflecting on our easy conversations together, I asked Stephanie about her reticence to interact: "Normally I just sit back and listen. . . . I'm afraid I'm going to say something stupid. Unless I think of something that I know is good, and not stupid . . . if it sounds stupid in my head, I won't say it." While we talked all term, in and out of her classes, she had so much to say and was such fun to talk with. I could not imagine why she would not be the same way in class, but I had forgotten that in

my own teaching experience I noticed that most first-term students fear making a mistake.

In addition to her newfound enjoyment with her writing activities, Stephanie loved the reading even more. When they had to read a certain number of pages each week for Hornby's *About a Boy*, she had read ahead:

> I don't want to put it down. Like, I'll eat my lunch at Landrum and I have that hour you know, between; like yesterday, I just read my book, and I just cracked myself up in that book. I'd start laughing and thought people must think I'm, like, stupid. (21 September 2004)

When she liked the material, and that occurred most of the time, Stephanie did the work ahead of time. She also said she had learned the teacher's style of quiz question: "I could tell in the book what kind of questions she'll ask in the essay. . . cuz it's the real obvious things that stand out. Little instances that are really funny. She'll mention it in the quiz. I made 110 on the last one." Her methodical strategy for taking reading quizzes consisted of moving from question to question without looking up. On the second quiz I noticed that, during the multiple choice part, she skipped a few questions. She groaned, "I'm horrible at multiple choice. I am. For some reason, I second-guess myself: well, it could be this or this."

Near the end of the term, Stephanie told me that she felt English was probably her easiest class: "I guess cuz I like it. I hate it if I have to miss a day. Like I had to miss and I wrote her an email: 'sorry I missed your class; I'm not trying to skip'" (9 November 2004). When I asked her if she noticed any changes in her reading speed or comprehension since the beginning of the term, she

quickly said she read more books. At my surprise that she had the time, she quickly explained: “There’s always time to read. Read before you go to bed. Read when you’re sitting down eating a meal, and you have a break in between classes. It’s always fun to get to a book cuz it takes your mind off anything else. That’s one of those relaxation things.” We immediately digressed to our love of the Harry Potter books. When her stepmother surprised her one day with the newly released third volume, Stephanie missed dinner to stay in her room and read it. Later in the interview she also explained an additional value that reading provided her: “I like to read a book sentence for sentence. But the more I read, the faster I read. It’s like a skill: the more you run, the faster you run.”. This understanding of practicing a skill in order to acquire knowledge rather than just learn it was part of her homework ethic as well: “It’s like Calculus. You practice it” (21 September 2004). She understood that homework was assigned to help students study and acquire the skills necessary for learning the content.

In spite of Stephanie’s talent, she acknowledged that she could have been a better student, that she had not tried to improve bad habits from high school: “I’m the same. . . . I just got done what needed to be done. Isn’t that bad?” (21 September 2004). But she also understood that part of her lack of motivation came from her desire to be a music major, not an engineering major: “I want to major in something that I like. . . . That way I’d like working for it. I’d love to know music theory . . . just different things like that I find . . . fascinating. I wouldn’t mind doing that every night.” In her usual matter-of-fact tones, Stephanie

explained that her parents insisted that she major in something that could offer her financial stability, not something unpredictable like music.

By our November interview, Stephanie “had done the math” and knew she would have her B-average for her 21 hours, even though she felt sure of getting a C in her Computers for Engineers class. In the initial weeks of this first term, she had let herself get behind on the new material, terms and procedures that she should have practiced and internalized in order to function smoothly in her future engineering courses. Like the others in this study (and many college students in general), factors from outside the class environment affected her adjustments to academic expectations: she had to miss a week of classes to visit her dying grandmother in the hospital and then return to deal with conflicting doctors’ diagnoses about her own health. She wasn’t sure if she was suffering from Grave’s disease or a thyroid problem, so for several weeks and as many doctors’ appointments, Stephanie had to balance the stress of the personal with the pressures of academics. In spite of the difficulties, Stephanie’s literacy practices helped her achieve acceptable grades; she was already looking forward to the next semester.

Gil’s Classes

On the first day of recruiting volunteers for my study, I visited E1’s 2:00 section of English 1101. Immediately after class three students dropped by my office to sign the waiver. From the first class meeting, I never expected Gil to volunteer, but there he was leaning over the desk and signing the form. Besides observing him in his English class, I would also be following him to his 9:00 am

MWF Economics class. Tristan, another classmate who volunteered, also had Econ, but she had a different teacher, so I would get to see two different approaches to the same core course.

At that first class meeting, E1 had students tell their names, where they were from, and some additional piece of information that might interest their peers. When Gil's turn came, he immediately described how small his school was: about 250 total students, K-12: "one hallway. I knew everybody, and everybody knew me" (17 September 2004). As he turned in his front row chair to face teacher and students, he continued to express his concern about college and lack of preparation for academic expectations. In an interview later, he told me that "in high school, I just goofed off all the time and still made [mostly] A's." He admitted to the class that he had no writing ability or much practice in high school; it had been a struggle just to earn a C. I immediately felt sorry for him and imagined how difficult socially it would be for him having to adjust to a shift in his image from being known by everyone to feeling invisible.

When he was in my office to sign up for the study, I commented on his concern about feeling unprepared for college-level work. Every response had a "yes, m'am." He told me that he was the first to go to college in his family, that he really didn't want to come, but his grandmother insisted. He wanted to stay on the family farm and eventually take over the business, but his grandmother said he had to have something to fall back on since farming was such an economically unreliable career. His concerns were valid, but his grandma was right: A college education would help him in ways he could not imagine right now.

Unfortunately as he faced a rigorous nineteen contact-hour schedule in his first term (Orientation, Economics, Health, Calculus I, Computers and Information Systems Management, Introduction to Business, and English 1101), the advantages were hard to appreciate.

Economics 2105

Like English 1101, this course is a required part of the core for all students. However, unlike English 1101, the room contained upperclassmen as well as freshmen. T3 taught the introductory Economics course with deliberate, detailed notes on the board. Occasional in-class quizzes forced most students to read the assigned material while WebCT quizzes reinforced the concepts covered in the classroom and textbook and was intended to help students practice for exam questions. Students earned their course grade from 3 tests (covering 3-4 chapters each time), a final, and quizzes.

Quite often, especially as she began a new chapter, T3 related the information from previous chapters to the information they were moving towards. For some of the more difficult concepts found in the course text, she made it clear to the students that *her* terms would be on the test, not the book's. Each day consisted of meticulous notes on the board as she discussed key concepts. Relying heavily on lecture format, she wrote in complete sentences in part, she explained, to help her habit of speaking too quickly. She also included a variety of colored markers at times to highlight key information on graphs and would often announce to students something that was important to know in order to encourage their writing it down. T3 showed the algebraic concepts necessary

for calculating profit margins and other economic figures, but she did not expect students to perform any for the exams; she just wanted them to see how the numbers came to be. Attendance was not required for this course.

Bright and early Monday morning of Week #2, I entered Gil's 9:00 Economics 2105 (Econ) in the College of Business building, which everyone calls *COBA.* This third-floor, windowless room housed about sixty-five desks, the kind with wire racks underneath the plastic seat and round-edged table top. At 8:50 students were wandering in. Some were reading or re-reading a front-and-back *New York Times* article apparently assigned as homework. One student explained the gist of the article to the female sitting behind her. Musical static from one student's headphones leaked across the room. By 8:55 thirty-six students had found a seat. The teacher (T3) walked in and passed around an attendance verification sheet, only for those who had not signed last week. Gil showed up at 9:02 as students were putting their books away for the three-question quiz. He chose the third seat from the front of a middle row. Fifty-five of the sixty-two seat limit were filled.

Every time she used her blue or black marker, T3 made complete sentences rather than record key words or phrases. As Gil had started turning pages in his textbook looking for Chapter 2, T3 explained to the class that she would be jumping around in the chapter, reassuring them that there was no need to panic if they couldn't immediately find the information. She also put page numbers on the board from time to time as well to help students find the

vocabulary. At the end of class, she also passed out a schedule of assignments filled with homework and test dates to clarify information on the syllabus.

After the quiz, T3 began reviewing Principle Number 6 as she wrote Number 7 on the board. Gil's book was open. My being seated three rows over and several back from him made any detailed observations impossible. However, I noted that every time the professor wrote something on the board, Gil would write in his spiral notebook; he had stored it underneath his textbook when class began and pulled it out only when the teacher began her lecture. When T3 finished the last three principles, she asked the students if they had any questions and paused a few seconds before moving to Chapter 2.

During my second observation in this class, Gil arrived about five minutes early and chose the first row by the wall, sitting in the third seat. The room was half-filled, for various reasons: it was the Friday before Labor Day weekend; it was the University of Georgia versus Georgia Southern televised football game weekend; Hurricane Frances was nearing south Florida. When I asked him in the first interview about his seat location, Gil explained that he could "see the board, no blocking" with that strategy (17 September 2004). He sat sideways, his back to the wall for most of the time. His book on the left side of the desktop and notes on the right, he looked to the board and recorded whatever and whenever T3 wrote. Often, he leaned his head on his right arm, his cheek resting on his fist as T3 drew a graph or illustrated a concept. Once the board became filled with information, T3 would move to the far left of the whiteboard and begin erasing until everything was gone. Later, in an interview with her, she explained this

strategy was a way to let students finish writing and for her to slow down with her talking since she feared she spoke too quickly otherwise.

I visited the following Wednesday, Week 7, for the final observation of the first phase. T3 walked in and began putting information on the far left side of the board, most of it a review of Friday's class since so many had been absent. She also announced the first test date would be Monday, September 13, and suggested they use the WebCT activities as practice for the test; the last score on WebCT would be the one that stayed, not the highest score. Exam questions would be similar to her words used in class rather than textbook jargon. Since she had been sick and missed many office hours the week before, T3 moved the on-line Quiz #1 deadline to noon on Thursday.

I found myself worrying about Gil, since he had told me on several occasions that he learned best by listening. However, he often skipped this class. I wondered how he was going to figure out what T3 thought was important, since he told me, "she'll just tell you what's important. . . . she writes it on the board; then she takes a break and talks about it, and then she writes it on the board, so she gives you a lot of time to write it down" (17 September 2004). From looking at a sample of his notes from the course, I could see that he did just what he said: he recorded only what the teacher wrote on the board. On the two-page sample from one day's session, he recorded her words exactly; after one word he added four exclamation points, the only personal connection made to any of the words and symbols on his notes---except for an outline of a flame that took center space on the page.

Because Gil had skipped on one of my scheduled observation days, when I saw him in English later that afternoon, I told him that T3 had made some announcements. He told me that he had already planned to go to her office after class to get the information. In our first interview during Week 5, Gil didn't feel too concerned about his studying strategy since he combined T3's teaching style with his own reading style:

> She tells us to go back and read the chapters because it might be on the test, and she might not put a lot of emphasis on it, but we're responsible, so I just . . . the stuff she goes over in class, I study it, and then I just reread the chapters. (17 September 2004)

He had difficulty articulating how he knew what text information was significant: A few days before the test, "I just reread the chapter, and if I see something that sticks out in my mind, I'll write it down in my notebook . . .something she didn't say but that I think is important and other people think is important. Then I put it down cuz it might be a subject on the test." Part of his choosing what he considered important may have come from his having taken an Economics course in high school, even though it was in the ninth grade.

Although he could not explain what made something "stick out," clearly Gil was trying to predict test questions: "And then I just reread my notes a couple days before the test and just reread over them both days." He told me, "I'm studying more [than I did in high school]. I don't feel I'm making as good a grades, but I'm studying more." I asked him during the second interview in Week 12 if he felt that he had changed his reading strategies at all for college: "not

really . . . I'd just make a mark. Reading's not all that hard. I can comprehend pretty good" (8 November 2004). I asked if he skimmed the chapter before he actually began reading an assignment: "I just start at the beginning and keep reading. Try not to miss anything." When I asked him what "anything" meant, he explained, "you know, how they put the little stuff," meaning the marginal notes and pictures. He recognized some sort of value in the extra information in the text. Perhaps those illustrations or elaborations signified important ideas for a test.

When asked if his reported lower-than-expected course average was from poor test grades, he blamed "just the online quizzes and stuff like that . . . I have a lot of trouble with it. . . . cuz of the way she words stuff and the book words stuff; I just get confused. I look for one of them instead of the other one" (8 November 2004). Fortunately, when I asked if he had gone by her office for help, he had gone the day before and was going again, but he didn't seek that help until Week 11. I suggested that he bring the teacher examples of quiz questions he had missed or got confused so that she could more quickly understand what his problem might be, and it would save the professor time getting to the root of the difficulty.

Gil reported that the best advice anyone gave him before coming to college was that two hours of study time for each hour of class time was true. I asked him why that was true, explaining, "By going ahead and doing that *at the beginning of the semester*, then you won't be behind in the end; you'll be ahead." I am assuming that his studying two days before the test was part of the being

“behind in the end” anxiety that he was feeling. Since he felt that his reading comprehension skills were competent, he could not understand why he wasn’t doing well in the course.

Where his reliance on auditory learning came from can be correlated to routines from high school. Gil described what his U.S. history class was like in the private school he attended in his last two years: “He read us the newspaper every day. He just read, like, little things, like the front page or sports if he thought it was interesting. Then on Friday he’d read stuff like dumb crooks, stuff like that. Just a fun day” (8 November 2004). The current event quizzes were over “what he talked about,” so Gil had relied on remembering as his only form of learning. “No studying in high school,” he told me. I imagine that the quizzes did not cover four to six weeks of several chapters of information filled with terminology, or that difference in content made his memory ineffective for college academic literacy expectations.

English 1101

E1’s expectations for her course housed in the computer lab included participation in a variety of peer activities, drafting essays, composing on WebCT on demand, and reading from the assigned text as well as from sources found on the web. Attendance was not required, but any missed graded class activity could not be made up; the student would earn a zero each time.

Her methods required that E1 demonstrate, model, and include hands-on activities. Having immediate access to the internet created daily temptations for the students, so E1 incorporated several activities to keep the students on task.

On most days, she called the class's attention to the front screen to share an example or ask a student to share something for class discussion at hand. E1 also required her students to create a web page, so she spent many class periods over the term taking students through the steps needed to meet the assignment's demands. Though she did not require one-on-one conferences in her office, E1 frequently reminded the class that she would be in her office and suggested that more of them come by for help with their drafts. In addition, much of the lab time E1 spent moving throughout the room to offer students some individual help.

One of the differences I noticed between Gil's literacy strategies in Economics and English, a course in which he felt he had no skill, seemed to be influenced by his attitude towards the class environments. In our first one-on-one interview, I had asked him how he felt about the teaching styles: "I think E1 is doing a really good job, but T3, I wish there was more class interaction because just sitting there listening to her talking don't make class as fun, so you don't look as forward to coming" (17 September 2004). English class required small and large group discussion, which fit in with Gil's way of learning: "I like to be part of the interaction cuz it, like, frees you up and lets you express your opinions on stuff and actually get involved in class. You don't just read the book; we have discussion." Having a teacher who includes multiple drafting and peer evaluation also created the best environment for Gil to hone his literacy skills---reading, writing, and speaking:

> When we get in groups . . . when I'm at home rereading my paper, I just go over stuff so fast cuz there's nothing to do but just read through it real quick-like, but then when we got in those groups and I heard other people's papers and how they expressed their stuff, and then when I read mine out loud and slowly so everybody could hear it, I noticed what I needed to do in my paper.

Although he had not yet recognized how to critique his own work, and therefore merely "read through it quick-like," being aware of what he could change in his drafts made Gil feel confident as a student. Being part of a small group conversation also contributed to his sense of belonging.

Although he never took notes in English class, Gil's early draft of the second major assignment of the semester, on *Time* magazine, revealed some of his personality and a lot about his struggles with the paper (See Appendix F). He began with a somewhat unique hook: "In the beginning there was man. I say in the end there will be machines." However, the rest of the opening was rigid: "This essay will be about . . . I will try to . . ." The body paragraphs included mostly facts and citations from the magazine but little analysis relating to a controlling idea. Perhaps some of the lack of development came from his knowing that the teacher would give him help with content. E1's comments suggested improvements in these areas in her end comments: "You have a seed of an idea here . . . Once you've revised/strengthened your body paragraphs, you'll also come to a stronger conclusion." She asked him questions to help answer "how else does *Time* document that our lives are now dependent on machines?" A

pattern that I noticed about his organization strategy was his formulaic “ending” to paragraphs, which really served as transitions to the following paragraph rather than serving as analysis of the ideas within the paragraph itself—a common symptom of high school training for writing literary analyses that I have witnessed over the years when visiting classrooms.

Liking the class seemed extremely important to Gil; he brought it up several times during our interviews. He confessed that a weakness he had noticed already was attending class: “Like I said, not knowing anybody and everything like that, you’re not looking forward to getting up and going to class. . . . It’s like the second time I’ve missed [Econ]. . . . but . . . the other classes, like the ones I like [English], I’m there twenty minutes early every day” (17 September 2004). Even though one of his English classmates was also in his Healthful Living class, Gil didn’t enjoy that class: “I don’t really like it because there’s so many people in there, like 290.” In such a large class where he felt invisible, not only did Gil feel uncomfortable; the discomfort motivated him to skip class more often than in those courses he enjoyed.

Gil had chosen to live in an apartment off campus, and he knew that part of his feeling of isolation was due to this situation. In addition, since neither he nor his roommate had a personal computer, he had to be disciplined with his organizational skills as well. For instance, if he didn’t get his assignments done before he left campus, Gil often created unnecessary problems for himself. At times, he confessed that he needed the textbook to do his online quizzes for Economics class, and “I kept forgetting my book at home. And I don’t have the

internet at home, so I just . . . time was up" (17 September 2004). Consequently, he missed quiz deadlines if he had to take time to return to campus to do work since he seldom chose to go back to campus once he left it.

Gil had tried to make study arrangements with classmates, but again, several problems prevented any success in that area. When I asked him about why he had not joined a study group, he explained that with

> just a whole bunch of people that are in the same classes . . . you see them, but you don't talk to each other in class. You're in such a rush to get to your next class that you don't say "hey, what's up? I'm Gil. We're in a bunch of classes together." That's part of the reason I'm dropping Calculus because it's the only class that's way on the other side [of campus].

Much of the rush to class anxiety was genuine. On my observation days, I found myself practically running to get to any class that wasn't within two buildings of the previous one.

Even when he did attempt to ask a classmate for help, it didn't work out: "I keep trying to ask this girl [who is in] my Orientation, my Econ, and my Health class, trying to get her to help me, but she never does" (8 November 2004). When I asked if she said she would and then would not come, he said that was not the problem: "I just say, 'Hey, have you done those quizzes? Could you help me explain?' and she'd be like, 'no, I haven't done the quizzes yet. I got to go.'" In addition to the lack of time anxiety was his shyness: "I don't know anybody, so it makes me nervous. I get nervous and don't want to answer a question in class.

Cuz in case I'm wrong" (17 September 2004). Whether his classmate's answer was genuine or not, it must have been hard for that small town guy to ask for help in the first place. Fortunately for him, Gil frequently went to E1's office to get help with his essays. Perhaps because he received immediate and detailed feedback before the grade was given, he was more motivated to seek out help from the professor. The WebCT quizzes in his Economics class could give him an instant grade, but not the explanation of why his answer was wrong or what he could do differently to improve.

In spite of his difficulties, Gil's reported overall GPA at the end of the term surprised me. He felt certain that he would be maintaining a B average for the term since he expected a few A's in other courses.

Part of his success may be due to his family encouraging and expecting him to succeed. In the first interview during Week 5, I asked him if he was a different student than he was in high school, and he answered yes without hesitation: "Here, I haven't done anything. I mean not goofed off or anything like that. I'm actually studying more" (17 September 2004). However, as the term went on, he had skipped in some of the courses that he did not enjoy. At the end of our second interview I asked him if he felt better about being at college: "I think I'm more comfortable. I'm making friends in class, just people to talk to in class" (8 November 2004). His roommate, a fourth-year student, helped Gil with the social scene as well: "I'm actually making a lot of friends through him . . . I joined flag football with him" (17 September 2004).

Tristan's Classes

Tristan, unlike Gil, had a very busy social life outside of class. Added to her fifteen-hour semester was pledging for a sorority. The extra work had Tristan frustrated many times. Sudden, fleeting smiles would mix with furrowed looks as she tried to explain the problem: "a typical day, I go to class at 9:30 or 10:00; then I go to class at noon, and then again, and I'm out at 3:15. Usually I go work out for, like, an hour, whatever. But today we have Junk Food with Juniors at 6:30, and then we have a meeting at 8:00, which will last until 10:00, so if I have homework, I've got to do it some time" (Interview, September 15, 2005). Not only did she have additional time commitments that cut into her homework schedule, but she also had to study for sorority tests: "and that's another couple of hours . . . It's like 80 names you just have to know. I know some of the girls, but not all of them yet [Week 5]. But I just push all that, cuz school comes first." Tristan's anxiety involved keeping her priorities on academics. All too often students want so much to be chosen by their Greek organization that schoolwork takes second place.

Besides her actual struggle with time management, Tristan was also learning to cope with the life of a residence hall. Due to the noise or interruptions of neighbors, she knew that she needed "to find the hours to come to the library cuz I can't sit in my room . . ." Plus, she admitted that the room was a mess, so she had nowhere to study in peace. When asked if she were pre-reading, Tristan sounded exasperated:

> I can't, I can't do it. Like, my dorm sucks. It doesn't suck, but it's just so cluttered. There's nowhere to put anything, and I can't sit on my desk. And I'll want to watch tv or eat . . .I wanna try to read before classes, but . . . there's a lot of work to do with other classes, and then to do that, I can't read; I'll fall asleep. It's hard for me to read chapters." (15 September 2005)

By going to the library instead of her room, I interjected, she could get a lot of the work at least started, and that beginning might relieve some of her stress. She also tried to explain her difficulty with comprehension: "Sometimes those questions are just so . . . abstract you couldn't read it; you just have to make a guess about it," so predicting exam questions just from the text was out of the question. Like Philip, one of the other participants in this study, she didn't seem to have any active reading strategy to help her make meaning from homework assignments.

Economics 2105

T2 told his students to make the effort: read, take notes, and study. His syllabus listed the assigned reading, and in class, all of his effort went into demonstrating what the textbook tried to convey. His lecture approach was filled with humorous, everyday examples to illustrate key concepts and a sprinkling of questions thrown out to the class. He expected students to ask questions in class and to complete quizzes or homework on WebCT. This course and the teacher assumed students could perform basic algebraic equations in order to construct graphs illustrating supply and demand situations. Students had 3 multiple choice

exams covering 4 chapters each, a cumulative final, WebCT homework, and quizzes. Like the other Economics class in this study, the course consisted of first-years through seniors and had no attendance policy.

Observing Tristan in her Economics classes proved more difficult than I had envisioned. Because her Econ teacher gave students the choice of attending his morning session or his evening class, I would often show up at the scheduled 9:30 class, but Tristan would have attended the once-per-week, three-hour evening class. In addition, since I would arrive early, I could never choose the best seat for observations because students would sit wherever there was a seat available by the time they made it to class. Often, then, Tristan would be three to four rows away and blocked from view by classmates. However, each time she entered, and always with a girlfriend, she would look for me and flash a beautiful smile to acknowledge me. She always had her notebook open and several colors of highlighters out. If T2 gave a due date, Tristan would reach down to her book bag on the floor and pull out her Eagle Eye (the school-provided calendar and university rule book), writing with pen and then highlighting it usually in pink or yellow.

I asked her about her note-taking strategies. She preferred the highlighter over the pen: “If you highlight something, it stands out, and that’s what I look at, and it’s a lot easier when I go back over it. And it’s fun. You can do the bullets and something else. I don’t know, just so it doesn’t get too cluttered with one color. So, this way, I see exactly what he wants. With my pen it all goes together” (15 September 2004). She reported that she highlighted her notes and text: “I do

both. I highlight the book, too, cuz like some classes, like Health and Sociology, I don't even take notes. It's all in the book." Her explanation caused me to ask about the strategy in Economics, where T2 did not lecture at all from the book.

"He's got examples. He doesn't go by the book. I even brought my books to class." She had already begun to read her teacher:

"'See me workin'? I love that. He says that, like, a million times. He'll say it, and if he repeats it, ya know this is important. This is a good test question" (15 September 2004).

When I told her that I enjoyed the way T2 would announce a procedure or student response that he thought was appropriate, Tristan added,

"And if he wants you to know something, he'll let you know. [He's] straightforward."

After one particular test, T2 pulled up the WebCT quiz so that he could discuss it with the class. He showed them as well as told them that they needed to use the information given in the question to respond to the question, and he reminded them that his study guide was just that: a guide, and not the answers to the test. First and foremost, he told them to read the question; read the choices; don't recall from the guide sheet (Lecture, 19 October 2004). Tristan understood this. The test had application questions and not just the lowest level of memorization of terms: "[The test] first nine were like an example of one type of brand. The rest were like, half of it was the definition-type thing . . ." Part of her comfort with this course seemed to come from having had Economics in high

school, so “it’s kind of a recap” of the material while one of her Residence Hall Assistants, a junior, thought the course was hard.

Right at the mid-term mark in the semester, teachers at Georgia Southern must report freshman grades as an “S” or “U” to help make students aware of their progress. I decided to look at T2’s posted reports; he had his two sections, the 9:30 am and 6:00 pm, available. On his website T2 displayed a point system and put the range-key at the top right of the screen. I was stunned at the grades, especially considering that freshmen through seniors were the demographic make-up: of the 123 students, 60 had earned Fs. Out of 246 possible points, those 60 had earned less than 135. Fifteen of those points were a homework grade, 2 were tests worth 99 points each, and one, a re-test for the first exam, was worth 33 points (12 October 2004). Worried at what I saw, I immediately emailed Tristan to see how she had fared. She said she wasn’t doing that well, but she still had a B at that point. Part of her success seemed to be related to T2’s teaching style. He used lots of humor and everyday, student-related examples to illustrate the important concepts: “then, you can, like, when you look at your notes, you can remember ‘Oh, he said Norm off of *Cheers*’” (15 September 2004). As she mentioned earlier, she could read the clues about important information that he gave during lectures: “see me workin’?” meant she could count on that concept being on the test. Tristan also had a friend in the same class. They tried to study together, but when they went to the library and sat down, she said to her partner, “Well . . . How do we do this?”. Still, being lost together made her more comfortable, which is why she made sure to choose

classes with at least one known friend in them “because then you can study . . . call them to ask a question.” Like Gil’s, Tristan’s knowing someone in class seemed to play an important role for motivation and learning.

English 1101

Her confidence shrank when Tristan talked about English class, in part due to her high school experiences. On more than one occasion Tristan informed me that she was more of a math person. She had unpleasant memories of English teachers prescribing what to say, such as “Make sure you do this kind of clause,” but she enjoyed E1’s class structure. This particular class met in the computer lab every day, so students worked at screens placed below the glass table top of their seating area. In two class sessions, E1 spent entire class periods mixing her teaching strategies from working one-on-one to talking with small groups, to modeling for the entire class. Through her methods, she could clarify or answer most of the students’ questions about the assignment.

On the first of two visits, many students came without the required draft needed to do the planned activity. Tristan came prepared, but her group members did not. E1 still pulled student samples of their freewrites up on the screen, but she had to extend the deadline for turning in the activity that had originally been due by the end of class. During the November 2 class time, the teacher spent half of the class period modeling documentation expectations: “Let me walk you through this [a student paper as a sample]. Everybody get to a computer.” She also reminded them of her office hours: “I’ll be in my office tomorrow from 12:00 to 3:00. Erica was the only one who came by today for

help" (2 November 2004). As she showed them parts of the student's paper, I noted that only two students were taking notes. Several more minutes passed as the teacher asked questions and pointed out information before more students began taking notes.

As with most students, Tristan seemed to remember the exactness of grammar and punctuation more than the drafting process: "I always remember like 'Make sure you do this kind of clause' and I can't; I don't know . . ." (15 September 2004). However, when I asked her if she were doing okay on her papers, she seemed more positive: "Just talking about putting it on paper, I don't have to worry about fragments and changing tense." E1's in-class writing activities (freewrites, reading responses) gave students time to think through their ideas before working on major drafts. She also required that students turn in early drafts so that she could make comments, suggestions, and ask questions to help them develop their papers. For Tristan, the teacher's implementation of writing to discover rather than just writing for a grade helped give this student time to articulate the ideas she wanted to express (See Appendix G).

In spite of confidence in the drafting process, Tristan recognized early on that one of her weaknesses was "not asking enough questions." In spite of no grammar worries early on, she didn't take time to clarify assignments as she worked on them, so the pedagogical strategy of having students turn in a draft for teacher comments fed into Tristan's weakness. Rather than making an appointment with the teacher to discuss the *Time* magazine assignment that she was confused about, Tristan chose to turn in an underdeveloped paper, hoping

that the comments would help her complete the assignment: “I don’t know how to put it together, so I just keep going. I’ll fix it later” (8 November 2004). The “fix it later” suggests that once the teacher added her comments, Tristan would have a better sense of what to do. She did seek help on several occasions during the semester, but she admitted that on this particular assignment, she procrastinated. Her response illustrated her problem:

> I’m comparing advertisements, so I print them all out and look at a Ford and a Ford and see what the slogans are. I just compare them like that. I don’t know; I didn’t really do that well on that paper . . . I kinda turned in a half-way paper . . . I just procrastinated a lot. I was kind of confused about what was asked about the paper, so . . .

Even though she had a general idea of what to compare, Tristan was still unsure what E1 expected in the draft, yet she didn’t ask for help before the draft deadline. Rather than going to E1 for help with the early draft, Tristan was relying on teacher comments to make the draft stronger.

Trying to understand whether Tristan’s procrastination was due to making poor choice about time management or avoiding a difficult assignment, I asked about her strategy for putting the paper together. She clearly didn’t know how to include more than the factual information for comparison:

> I don’t know how I did it. . . . I started with comparing the magazine as a whole and then slowly getting back and breaking it down. I don’t know how I’m going to end it. Some people have five pages; mine’s like only two” (8 November 2004).

Part of her problem with drafting, I observed, came from ineffective peer responses in the class activities. When E1 had the small groups get together, Tristan's peers never moved around to face each other across the table tops as most of the other students did. Instead, they sat side-by-side, which prevented any real group interaction whether it be eye contact or constructive conversation.

Even during my second round of observations in Weeks 10 and 11, nothing in the small group dynamic seemed to have changed. The linear design for Tristan's group was still in place. Tristan, pen in hand, tried to read one of her peer's drafts as he continued to talk to her. She would nod, shoot him a quick glance, and then move her eyes back to the draft. Her peer finally settled down and began looking at someone's draft. After a few minutes, I watched her point to places in his draft and suggestions for revising. Tristan suddenly handed her own paper to the blonde female who sat in the row ahead of her: "You can write all over it" (2 November 2004). When I asked Tristan if the peer work I observed had helped her, she said, "If I were in [the blonde girl's] group, that would be helpful. . . . The guys don't say anything; they don't give me anything." In our first interview, I had asked her how she chose where she sat in her classes, and for English she once again had to be familiar with at least one of the people near her: "Actually, he dates one of my pledge sisters" (15 September 2004). She admitted that she knew all three seemed to be "slackers," but since she knew one of the friends a little, she gambled on familiarity to help her in the course.

Although admitting that she may not have visited her professors' offices often enough, she tried not to miss class: "Like math, I've never missed a day. . .

. You just have to understand or you'll get behind. . . . Or English cuz they take attendance" (8 November 2004). Like the others in this study understood, she knew that class attendance was as crucial as doing homework if they wanted to learn or even to earn a higher course grade.

Tristan's reported a high grade point average even after she had a frustrating beginning of the term: "Some classes are As, and some are borderline Bs, almost Cs, so . . . I want to make the dean's list; that's my goal." Her desire to make the dean's list was certainly influential in seeking the 3.5 for the term, but Tristan also told me, "I'm interested. I want to learn. Like, in high school, it was like social life, and now I'm, like, I need to learn this stuff—not just for college, but for life." She had made it through the first semester.

Philip's Classes

Philip was in the same English class as Gil and Tristan, so he was one of the first to come by the office to sign the permission form for my study. When he came to the group interview on the Monday of Week 2, he seemed quite confident yet pressured about the academic expectations. Most of the pressure came from his family, who promised to withdraw all financial support if he didn't keep the HOPE scholarship. Philip felt the difficulty would be convincing his parents that maintaining As and Bs in college would be much more difficult than it was in high school, especially since neither parent had completed a college degree, so they were not as aware of the difference in expectations. In spite of the outside pressure, Philip told me in the interview that he felt confident about his English and math skills. He had always gotten high grades without much

effort. Although college might be challenging, he trusted his ability to adjust to his fifteen hours of course work during his first term.

Music Appreciation

A "limited required" course, Music Appreciation is one of ten, three-credit core course choices within the Area C Humanities. T1 explained that most students sign up thinking that the course will be easy since they like music; she didn't expect any of them to read music or recognize the variety of music styles that the course includes. Along with the required daily attendance came a tremendous number of basic vocabulary and musical concepts that students had no choice but to write down. She also required students to attend a concert and then write a report following clear guidelines. Because of its introductory nature, this course was heavily lecture-format. Students had 4 take home and in-class listening exams, a final, four concert reports, and in-class concert reports for guest lecturers. Under the syllabus title, T1 included this instruction: "Corresponding chapters to the subject matter listed must be read prior to class." She expected students to read regularly.

T1 also incorporated playing samples from several pieces to help illustrate key concepts of the particular period being covered. She took time to explain ideas or set the context of the time period, pre-listening, then played the recorded piece, narrating in particular places to help students identify "tone" or "movement" for example, all the while incorporating the vocabulary within context and gesturing the musical beats with her right hand as she spoke. At times she would ask the class to look at a handout or a page from the textbook, having the

students follow along as the music played. As part of her strategy to help students learn the concepts, T1 included a take-home portion of the exam so that students could read and listen to the textbook-provided CD to prepare for the in-class listening and short answer portion.

I visited his Tuesday-Thursday 11:00 music class the next day. The teacher of record was out of town working with an orchestra in New York City. In a room with fifty desks, twenty-five students eventually took their seats. In my experience as an advisor for undeclared majors and as unofficial advisor to my own students, I had heard the thinking about taking Music Appreciation: “only if Art in Life was full.” Consequently, I found myself wondering if the other half had dropped already or if that particular section was limited to twenty-five.

Being to the immediate right of Philip, my vantage point was perfect for watching his conduct during the lectures. When I asked him in our first interview how he chose his seat, he said,

> Wherever. Like, sometimes, I want to get away from certain people. Like being around people, I can see how they are, and if they’re talking a lot, I don’t want to sit near them cuz it’s more distracting. So if you noticed, there’s like a big group of people over in the other corner [in music class], so I decided to sit on the other side. (16 September 2004)

His 3-ring binder was open; his text was still in the cellophane wrapper. On the left side of the desktop sat his handout. I could see why students might be intimidated in this course: the temporary instructor was reviewing musical vocabulary from the double-sided handout and playing samples as he switched

between using the piano and the CD stereo system. I had trouble hearing the *tonic* or *dominant*, the new terms introduced. He moved quickly, so I was not sure how many of the other students could follow along and how many were too afraid or bored to ask for clarification.

Philip often propped his head on his left hand, his flip-flopped feet propped on the wire book carrier at the bottom of the desk in front of him. As the teacher talked, he doodled in the margin of his paper, seldom looking up. From time to time he would adjust his notebook clockwise to accommodate the doodles filling the space. He looked up when the instructor played samples from the James Bond films but quickly reverted to doodling as the teacher explained the harmony and dissonance in the piece.

A week later, I found the same seat in Foy 3300, home of the music class. As he approached his seat, Philip handed me his course syllabus to copy. His textbook was still in its wrapper. As he put his bottle of water on the desk, he told me that he had forgotten to take his ADHD medicine. At 10:02, the teacher had not come in yet, and the myth of the “five-minute rule” dominated student conversation. The teacher (T1) arrived at 10:05, apologizing with a smirk for the broken coffee maker delaying her and assuring the students that class was still taking place. Philip’s notebook was out and opened on his desk. As she clarified the required Concert Report assignment on the handout, Philip whispered that he had already spoken to her about it. First-term students usually have a difficult time realizing that they must initiate the communication with their professors, so

his early response signaled to me that Philip might do quite well with academics if he continued to take responsibility for his work.

On the chalkboard at the front left side of the classroom, T1 explained blues chord progression and pointed out that the first line of text usually repeated before going on to other chords. While Philip took his faded steel blue ball cap on and off periodically during the class, his left elbow rested on the desk, allowing his hand to support his head. With his pen top propped in his lips, he doodled on the right side of his notebook paper. T1 used the remote to start the next sample of music; she marked the chords with her hand flowing back and forth in front of her to indicate the progression. Philip continued to doodle as she narrated what was happening in the piece. I never caught on to the shifts and felt quite inadequate. How many of those students had any musical background before this class, I wondered.

Using samples from contemporary as well as classical music, T1 continued to illustrate what some of the terms meant. As a Jewel song played, Philip's head moved closer to the handout containing the song lyrics, underlining the A or B areas that T1 pointed out (A represented a new verse; B represented the chorus). Trying to train the class by modeling what to listen and look for, she told students that there were four As and four Bs to find as they followed along. The training seemed to serve as preparation for the in-class portion of course exams. Philip looked to the text, frowned, and underlined as the song played a second time. He crossed his feet, toyed with his cap while flipping it slightly on and off, resting his forehead on his hand in between looking to his left and then at

the teacher. He skipped lines, using two lines and then skipping one. I asked him how he could predict what might be on the music tests: “she stresses, like ‘this is important; you need to write this down; it’ll be on the test’” (16 September 2004). He also emailed her or dropped by her office when he had questions about the course information or assignments. After asking him if he got nervous having to contact his instructors, he quickly responded, “Nope. That’s why I chose this school.”

During the Week 10 observations, I tried to identify any changes in Philip’s literacy strategies. Walking in just as the lecture began and looking sleepy, he sat in his usual place. His book, no longer in its cellophane wrapper, was stuffed with notebook papers, their corners and edges poking out from the pages in all directions. He opened his 3-ring binder to a blank piece of paper. As the lecture continued, Philip filled the pages in similar fashion as earlier in the term: groups of consecutive lines were filled with notes, and then he would leave a line or two blank. He added some words at an angle in the left margin towards the top half o the page. However, more of the lines this time seem indented and bulleted rather than staying flush with the left margin. I asked him what he thought his learning style was: “I’m hands-on. . . . That’s why I’m constantly—I write down everything they say. So it’s in my mind, but I can’t recall it, but if I go and look over it, it’s in my mind. It just helps me like that instead of just trying to read it.” He also stayed fairly consistent about doing his homework: “Right after class. I’ve done this every day except for one day this week cuz I was burned out taking tests . . . I

usually go from like three to four hours of class; I group everything [his classes] together. And then I go right from that back to my dorm room and do homework."

Right after his homework explanation, Philip commented that he needed to start on the music take-home test, but only after he finished some other assignments first: "Oh, I have so much work I need to get done before; that's not due til the 28th, so I've got other work I need to get done." He played in the evenings after the homework. Fridays and Saturdays were usually play, and Sundays were for homework. Like Tristan, he felt that his consistency with doing homework and attending class were his strengths as a student so far. Though he did not enjoy reading, Philip wished that he were better at it. Every time he tried to sit still in his room and read from the text, he told me, he fell asleep. He tried in the bed, at his desk, reading the words aloud; it all made him drowsy and frustrated.

When the teacher moved on to a new composer, Philip retrieved his book, turning to the yellowed areas of text that corresponded to T1's comments. She told the students that she expected them to describe the story of Smetana's "My Homeland" in accurate detail, how it painted every scene of the story in the music. Philip took notes on the right, his book positioned on his left. He looked at the text, then wrote as the music played and T1 narrated each scene's detail. With this longer piece, Philip's attention seemed to wane; he nodded off, his left hand holding up his forehead, which was hidden beneath the lip of his cap. In a few brief minutes, the room had turned terribly cold. Suddenly, he awakened,

wrote on the last few lines, and then turned the third page of notes to write on the back of this same page.

On the following week's visit, many of the students had begun bringing in drinks. Philip's green power drink sat on the right side of his desk top. T1 explained the day's design: they would study two pieces from the 20th and 21st centuries, but the take-home portion of the test would cover some of the gaps she could not fit into the time left. As she discussed the pieces, she tied in terms from earlier in the course, reminding students of previous information in order to see how Debussey differed. Above the noise of the air conditioning, she also explained how impressionism influenced literature and art as well as the music world.

Philip kept steady with taking notes; he used a whole sheet of paper on just this composer. He circled the word *fawn* as T1 explained the additional meaning. During the entire class period, intermittent sniffles and falling textbooks permeated the air. Raising the remote and pointing it at the stereo system, she illustrated the details: "Listen to the chord here . . . You'll hear this again . . . It's almost as if you could smell this [repeated melody with different harmony each time] . . . This is so interesting how . . ." (Lecture, 28 October 2004). Her descriptions were now filled with terminology to explain concepts, so T1 often tried to show her students how to think about the information: "If I was to ask what a *tonal* meant, what is tonal?" After a student responded, T1 explained how to best articulate the expected answer. Philip continued to doodle, jiggle his feet,

and hold his head between his hands as she lectured. She ended this class announcing that “Rites of Spring” would be the focus of the next class meeting.

In our second interview, Philip said that he had changed his study habits after experiencing his first exams: “I decided I didn’t want to cram everything. . . . I look over it every hour or two, just glance over it, and put ‘em back down, and watch tv.” For music class, the first part of the exam is a take-home: “she gives you an actual test, and we have to go through the book and read and everything to find the answers and put on the scantron, then bring everything back in class. Then we have a listening portion and just a regular portion we do in class” (8 November 2004). With this reading activity, Philip stayed focused since he knew what he had to look for: answers to the test. However, he seemed unable to pre-read and actively mark his text in order to predict in any way to help him save time with the take-home portion of the test. His strategy of doing the take homes the day before they’re due “helps me prepare for the [in-class] test.”

English 1101

Unlike his classmates Gil and Tristan, Philip, with an ADHD problem, had to learn to cope in courses such as English where small and large group interactions were conducted on a nearly daily basis. In our first interview, he described his ability to concentrate: “Oh, I hear other groups talking. I’m not always paying attention to ours, but I pick up the gist of it” (16 September 2004). He assured me that he had been taking his medicine, especially after his mother had come down to visit and noticed that he had missed a few days already. Within seconds of that announcement, however, he said, “Today, I forgot to take

them . . . .” Philip conveyed confidence in being able to keep up with the work in class despite the lapses in medication: “In English we did the exact same thing that we did Tuesday, like get into groups.” His overgeneralization of “the exact same thing” reflected his perception of drafting meaning minimal revising when the teacher expected new drafts with more information every day that they met since new peer critiques occurred each time.

Because his English class met in the computer lab, I also wondered how distracting the screens, positioned below the desktop, would be as they competed with the teacher for attention. For the individual writing times, Philip managed to stay focused, though he often finished earlier than most of his peers. After E1 pulled up one of the student’s responses to the daily prompt, she asked students to point out the effective parts of the post so that they could think about their own drafts. After modeling how to think about and discuss an early draft, she told the class to do the same with their assigned peers’ work. As the class got to work, I went into WebCT to see what types of responses Philip made. He used specific references from each person’s draft to explain his connection to their writing, and for both peers he recommended their adding “more interesting details,” (2 September 2004) though he did not offer suggestions for what would make the details more interesting.

I noticed that he had finished with peer work much quicker than most of his classmates and had begun writing a list on a piece of paper. When I asked if he were supposed to work on his draft after finishing with the peer work, he assured me that only peer work was required, that he was making a list of things

to do before he left town tomorrow. Another first-term writing flaw revealed itself: the perception that just getting through an activity quickly is all that is necessary to complete an assignment (and get a good grade). He told me that in high school, “I was always able to finish the last minute of class; then I don’t(sic) have to worry about it” (16 September 2004), so the routine was in place. When I interviewed him, in Week 5, he revealed that he hadn’t done well on the early draft: “Like when I misread the directions, I thought it was supposed to be something a little joyful, like to keep someone’s attention. That’s what I was basing it on. I didn’t think about like something really affected me cuz that’s why I did it on the little five car accident.” Misreading the topic is a common problem writing assignments, but he continued to misunderstand even after discussions and modeling by the teacher. Once he began writing, Philip didn’t return to the topic to be sure he had addressed everything the assignment asked the writer to do.

E1 called the class back for whole group discussion, asking them to share a sample or two of “good stuff” they’d read or written. No one volunteered, so she pulled up an example of an effective introduction in order to show students what type of strategies strengthen writing. When Philip leaned towards me to ask how appropriate it was to use curse words and how to do so if he could, my initial thought was that his ADHD was preventing his concentration. However, he went right back to paying attention to the teacher after my explanation. Class came to a close with E1 reminding them of her being out of town on Tuesday, so she

would extend her Wednesday office hours for questions about their drafts. Philip wrote down the announced times on his piece of paper.

Returning to observe during Week 10, I assumed students and teacher would be more comfortable with each other. I was not disappointed. E1 knew everyone's name and peppered in humorous comments that illustrated a sense of "insider" information, allusions to previous classroom activities. E1 put them into groups and handed out a half-sheet of paper containing three steps to use on the assignment students were to have worked on prior to this class. She wanted students to discuss *Time* magazine's Person of the Year from the decades each person had chosen; then, they were to try to identify what characteristics were used to determine Person of the Year.

Most students were not prepared, making excuses such as being absent and not knowing the assignment or having computer problems. Philip's group members were reading silently to figure out what their Person of the Year article was about. One member commented that he didn't know about the assignment until he looked on WebCT. Some in the group of four did not know what characteristics to pick out. Their inadequacies in critical reading, my teaching experience told me, contributed to their not having done the assignment for homework; they didn't know how to look for appropriate information. When E1, responding to a student's question, said she estimated a five-page final draft for this assignment, gasps rang out from most sections of the room. To help students work on the task, she walked from group to group, asking questions about the reading. Philip read with his pen in hand, sometimes holding tightly to

his hat with both hands and then turning it from front to back to front again as he gazed at the text. After most of class time had passed, E1 announced that the assignment was a disaster since students were unprepared. She also reminded to the class that absence was not an excuse; those who did not do the assignment would earn a zero for their daily grade. She suggested that they read more outside sources on their chosen person in order to understand the article.

During the following visit, I watched students in their peer groups reading aloud to each other. Philip read his draft about the magazine articles' differences through the earlier decade and in the present edition. As he finished reading, he told the group that he couldn't find advertisements on the website from the earlier time period. A female peer suggested that he "go more in depth" with his piece, which, he told the group, he had worked hours on only to produce two pages. In our second interview, Philip explained that with an English paper, he would "spread it out and work on it over a few days" because "if I push it all on one day, who knows what I might have to do" (8 November 2004). He also had tried to make appointments with E1 while "working on the rough draft . . . I didn't know I was doing or what I was going to put into it, so I had to go schedule an appointment with her," though apparently not for this particular assignment. Even though he could not find advertisements, he had not asked his teacher for help. For the last half of the class, E1 reviewed an MLA documentation hand-out; the ceiling-mounted projection system was still broken. Class ended with E1 walking students through Microsoft Word's protocol for making hanging indentations for a Works Cited page.

At the second interview on Week 13, Philip, like all the other students in my study, estimated a B-average for the term: “I have some As, a lot of Bs, and one C.” From what I had observed and heard from Philip, part of his academic success seemed to result from his staying in contact with his teachers and doing homework consistently. The two go hand in hand: if he did his homework in a timely fashion, he could identify what he didn’t understand about the material and therefore could contact his professors to get clarification or help with assignments before due dates arrived. Perhaps his ADHD motivated him to establish a few routines that would also offset his difficulty with course reading assignments. Whatever the cause, he knew that he would be needing even more time management control for next term since the seventeen-hour load consisted of calculus with lab, history, biology with lab, computer with lab, and English 1102.

Renee’s Classes

Renee was one of the quiet ones at the first group meeting at the end of Week 1. However, I soon learned that she had “always been the one to, like, sit back and observe and just listen to everyone” (16 September 2004). This one-minute oldest twin conveyed a sense of determination: “In high school, especially in my senior year, I really didn’t do hardly anything, and I realized that now I’m in college; I can’t do that.” Handling the transition from doing “hardly anything” just a few months before in a small school in a nearby rural county to taking full responsibility for learning material, going to class daily, and maneuvering through technology puts tremendous pressure on any new college student, yet Renee

seemed to just accept every new requirement or expectation. Maybe it was because her older brother was already attending the University of Florida and had shared his experiences and advice about college expectations, but for whatever reason, she never complained about the work or the teachers. From everything I observed about and heard from Renee, that realization of accountability was the motivating force behind her activity as a first-term student with a fifteen-hour course load.

Biology 1130

Biology 1130, like Music Appreciation, is a “limited required” course in the core since students can choose from four other sciences to meet this area’s three-credit mandate. The syllabus suggested that students attend class, but there was no strict policy. Like Economics 2105, this course is not limited to freshman, and it was full of upper-level students. Several assignments included WebCT use, and the paragraph of instructions about logging on suggested T4’s assumptions about her students’ technology competence. Students would take 3 exams, each covering 4 chapters, a final, and points for both in-class and computer assignments. Additionally, T4 explained in an interview that she expected her students to read the assigned pages listed on the course syllabus and used power point slides to highlight ideas from the chapters. She answered questions as the students asked for clarification. From time to time she drew on the chalkboard behind her in order to illustrate a concept further. Conducting class in a 300-seat auditorium required a heavily lecture-style format.

For my first visit the week before—the Friday of Week 2, I chose to sit at the back on the next to the highest row. Out of the twelve students sitting near me, only two had books out and open. Six had notebooks open and were taking down information from the lecture or overhead. For almost the entire fifty minutes two students nearby played with their cell phones, either text messaging or checking to see how many messages they had. The neon screens on the cells were quite distracting, as was the constant trickle of students who would get up and leave during the lecture. The females in the rows directly below me were passing notes, complete with smiley faces at end the sentences.

Because this 260+ seat biology class was located in the biology lecture hall, a round amphitheater, I had no trouble being able to sit right beside Renee to observe. Even though she always tried to save her twin a seat, she also saved one for me when she knew I was coming. Renee told me that she chose to sit down in one of the first few rows in order to hear the teacher's voice and explanations. As she waited for the professor to arrive, Renee looked over her notes from last week. On the right-top line, she dated the pages in her 3-ring notebook; the notes entered were neatly recorded. Renee kept the highlighter in her left hand, the pencil in her right. I asked about her recording strategy: "I've just tried to put points or asteriks by the real, real important things, or if she's just going on to a whole new different subject, then I'll skip a line. But if it's the same, then I don't; I just separate different ideas" (16 September 2004). Curious about her definition of "real important," I asked her how she determined the significance of information. "Mostly if she [teacher] says, 'this is important.' This is going to be

an exam question, so I put an asterik there." At first, I thought Renee had exaggerated about the teacher announcing the importance of some information over other pieces, but when I looked carefully at the power point up on the screen, there in parenthesis were the words *Possible Exam Question.*

My neck began aching after ten minutes of looking up at the screen. All at once I realized that what I had perceived as "slackers" up on the back rows might be sitting there where it was more comfortable to look at the screen. Many of us in the lower rows resorted to slouching, trying to locate an easier viewing angle than the nearly forty-five degree required from our spot, though with the slouching position we caused lower back pain. How much time had I spent thinking about my discomfort rather than focusing on the lecture? These students were forced to adjust to this environment three times a week for sixteen weeks as they tried to learn more about General Biology. Not once, however, did I notice Renee less than attentive; she sat relaxed but poised with straight back, her pen in hand, and notebook open.

Earlier Renee told me that she tried to pre-read the chapters for her classes, and I asked if the strategy helped in any way:

> If she mentions a word, I think, 'Okay, she's gonna talk about this, and she's gonna talk about this.' Then I'll think of things associated with the word instead of if she mentions it, and I'll go, 'I don't know what she's talking about.' . . . [reading before the lecture on the same material is] easier to comprehend cuz if she, like, goes into more detail, and then it

> goes more complex, then I have, like, the basics, and it won't be that hard to pick up on something that gets a little hard.

When I praised her work ethic, she responded in typical Renee fashion: "Well, I just got like this. It was nothing like this in high school. I just know it's something I'm going to have to do."

When asked if, during her pre-reading, she could predict test questions, her explanation revealed a predictable problem for many students: "I know that probably the words in the bold are gonna show up in the test either in the answer or the question, so I just try and know most of it [the information in the chapters]. I have to make sure I know it rather than saying I think I know it and just making sure I know the information" (16 September 2004). Her perception of knowing the information seemed to suggest memorization rather than any higher levels of comprehension. Looking for the vocabulary in bold also suggested that she expected the exam to contain definition-type questions. Regardless, part of needing to know the information pushed Renee to do her homework on a consistent basis. For biology, assignments ranged from WebCT activities to reading the chapters in the required textbook. T4 expected the students to maneuver through the technology; there was no in-class review of how WebCT worked, only instructions on the course syllabus for linking to and signing on to the WebCT site:

> Enter the address http://webct.georgiasouthern.edu in your browser and press return (Enter). Your Georgia Southern email username is your WebCT ID and your WINGS PIN is your password. Click on the course

you'd like to enter, and follow directions. The WebCT help center number is 486-7471; their email is webct@georgiasouthern.edu. (General Biology 1130B, Syllabus, Fall 2004)

Renee tried hard to stay up with the material in both places: "She, like, posted a study guide on WebCT to go over all the chapters, and she posted our answers to the quizzes that we took. . . I took the quiz over and seen(sic) what I did wrong and looked over the study guide, like reading over the chapter." On the first two WebCT quizzes, Renee earned a 3.7 out of 5 and on the second she missed 6 out of 30 questions. She used her past quizzes to help her learn the material: "when I look back at the quizzes . . . I was, like, 'Why did I choose that?''. Like Stephanie, Renee saw the strategy of reviewing in order to comprehend as one of her strengths as a student and learner. She also cited her attempt to pre-read as her other positive literacy practice.

Towards the latter part of class on my Week 3 visit, the teacher explained how a test question could be designed: she gave an example of a matching-type question about the respiratory system. At the end of that same class, the professor gave a quiz. I took a quick look around the amphitheater. There was no way to prevent cheating. Once the first few students finished and turned in their scantron sheet, walking all the way to the bottom of the lecture hall to place the form on the lecturn, they left the room, so I went to stand outside as well. Several students were laughing almost in disgust at how rampant the cheating was, one shaking her head and remarking that some of them had books out and opened.

After midterm in October, Renee's original professor went on maternity leave. The first-term students must have experienced panic. They all had to learn a new professor's way of presenting material, conducting class, and giving exams.

My first round-two observation took place on October 20. Everything seemed turned upside down: instead of a Caribbean female professor who stood close to the podium or the white board and presented textbook-publisher-exact-replica-overheads of chapter illustrations, students now had a white male who used very little power point, asked the students lots of questions, and continuously walked up the stairs on all three aisles and back down, all the while answering questions from the class or giving additional examples not addressed in the text book. The difference in presentation style alone kept me alert and focused on his every word. I wondered if the students felt the same way, and whether that sensation was out of fear or curiosity. Not a single student walked out during the lecture. If there were disruptive talking, the professor would pause and not begin again until neighboring students shushed the offending talkers. No more Monday class meetings; they would have an assignment to do and turn in at the Wednesday meeting time instead. No more WebCT activity either, though he reminded them of the upcoming exam, the date of which he had extended one week.

Later I asked Renee what she thought of this new person. She said he was alright, but she liked the original professor better. In our first interview when I had asked if there were things she wished some of her professors would do

differently, she explained, “Not really. I don’t really think they should. I guess that’s their style of teaching, so I just kinda get accustomed to it” (16 September 2004). Her motivation to do well had not dissipated in spite of having to learn a new teacher’s way of presenting material.

English 1101

E3 expected her students to read, come to class, and write drafts for every assigned composition. She also expected group work in peer reviews of paper drafts as well as with a multi-media production by the end of the term. Because of her wide range of demands in technology as well as reading and writing, E3’s attendance policy allowed for five hours of absence; on the sixth, students would earn an F for the course.

Classroom time was spent in Socratic questioning combined with whole class discussion about the assigned texts or about students’ drafts. Demonstration and interaction, the two most prevalent methodologies, also took place in the every-other-week Friday labs where students could be researching, peer reviewing electronic drafts, posting to WebCT, or streaming video into their mini-movies. E3 did require one, one-on-one conference in her office during the term. Any additional conferences were invited by E3’s written comments on drafts to come by her office.

Like the majority of students who volunteered for this study, Renee felt she was a stronger math person than an English student. Her reasons for the lower grade in high school English came from similar experiences that Tristan had had. Not considering herself good at English really meant being weaker in

grammar and punctuation. Unlike Tristan, though, Renee said that English was her most enjoyable course at the university. In the first interview she praised the teacher (E3): “I like the way [she] teaches her English class. . . . she’s going over all the different steps with us . . . so it’s really helpful for me cuz I’m not a really good English student at all. I like English class” (16 September 2004). During my class observations, E3 would often have assigned reading from their textbook and then discuss it in class, through Socratic questioning, how the writers structured their stories. In addition, standing at the computer console or the lecture podium, she invited the nineteen students to read or discuss ideas they planned to use in their own compositions and would then comment on possible ways to explore the story, the perspective, and the details. Sitting in the second desk from the front, Renee remained silent as others shared, but she did take a quick look at those speaking, sometimes smiling at the stories reported.

The every-other-week, two-hour Friday afternoon lab seemed as frustrating for this teacher as it was for Tristan’s teacher. Homework the night before required that students read each other’s drafts. However, student excuses and technology glitches took up the first fifteen minutes of class: several didn’t send drafts to their peers; some sent them but the text disappeared into cyber space; some students skipped class; two students were new enough or absent last week when the assignment was made, so they didn’t check with the teacher about the assignment. The teacher laughed through her frustration, reminding them that this plan had been all worked out the other day; students joked with her as she struggled to untangle the confusion.

Slowly, she got them focused on the new assignment. They needed to turn the narrative into a descriptive piece that would highlight one person or character from the narrative, showing his or her strengths and weaknesses (See Appendix H). One by one, each student told the class about the significance of the peer's paper; then they said whom they thought the descriptive piece should be about. This feedback and discussion helped the writer make the decision for focusing the new assignment. Renee told about her classmate's story, but the combination of her soft voice with the noise of twenty-four computers humming drowned out much of what she said. To compensate for the noise, E3 would repeat in paraphrase the ideas of each student who did not have voice projection. The teacher made sure to pair up the newer students (she had all four without drafts still talk about the drafts), ensuring that everyone spoke during the period. After this sharing of ideas, the teacher had the students turn to the descriptive language section of their texts, showing them examples to model their own writing on: sentences that create 3-D pictures. With half an hour left to the lab, she had students begin drafting this second major writing assignment. Few worked, though. At 2:30 on a Friday afternoon, it was noisy and hot. As they typed, some asked questions. Some were stumped as to how to begin. E3 had them turn in what they had started when lab ended and reminded them that group conferences would be set up on Monday to discuss this new draft.

In the second interview, Renee still considered English the most fun "cuz I really like E3. It's one of my smaller classes; it's one where we interact" (4 November 2004). To my surprise, when I asked Renee if she could explain why it

seemed fun, the quiet student said, “I guess it’s like I talk to more people in there.” I feigned surprise, exaggerated my reaction and questioned, “You’re *talking* now?!” She, too, laughed and looked slightly embarrassed, flashing a bright, white smile while looking down as if to avert her eyes: “yeah, since we have little group project things, you have to kind of, like, talk more, and then you’re going out doing interviews. That was fun.” Her personality might not be one to start the conversation, but Renee, clearly, did not let her quiet nature prevent her from participating and enjoying classroom dynamics.

Did her end-of-term grade point average match Renee’s determination? She predicted a B average, with two Cs in the mix, a 77 and a 78, but “I have two tests coming up, and I’ve been studying, studying, studying, so I know I can pull that up.” Her explanation for her grades derived partly from warnings given by family and high school teachers: “You don’t have anyone around telling you to read, read, read. You kinda have to do that on your own cuz the teacher really doesn’t care or not, so you really have to do that on your own. You know how sometimes they’ll give you a quiz, but in college, if you read, you read. And if you don’t, you don’t.” She applied that same philosophy to attending class, doing homework, and pre-reading as much as possible. It seems the disciplined routine of literacy practices she began those twelve weeks earlier played a great role in her academic success as a first-term college student.

Summary

In this chapter, I attempted to depict each of the five students, one at a time, as I observed them in their two classes during fall semester. Through the

sights and sounds of the students in their classroom environment, their stories show them surviving one of the biggest transitions of their lives. In Chapter 5 I will discuss some of the significant findings about their literacy perceptions and practices.

CHAPTER 5

THE UNIVERSITY LENS

"We learn what we expect to learn, as a consequence of the way we perceive ourselves and our interactions with the world." (Frank Smith, 1994)

Chapter 4 focuses on the students' perceptions, through their actions and discussions, of their literacy practices. This chapter analyzes what the students reacted to and talked about. In general, every professor expected that students had writing instruction, reading practice, and experience with taking tests, note-taking, and studying. Part of these assumptions, and reasonably so, come from GSU's required minimum verbal score of 540 for regularly admitted students, a score which suggests some literacy competence since the number reflects a higher percentile than the national verbal score of 508 (*GSU Fact Book*, 2004-5, p. 21). According to the NAEP, also referred to as The Nation's Report Card, eighth grade students in 2002 (those students closest in age to the ones in this study) averaged 152 out of a 0-300 scale on the writing portion of this national exam; Georgia's eighth graders averaged 147. These scores indicate that 82% of the state's students measured at the basic level or higher, two points below the national average of 84%, and also imply some level of literacy competence. In spite of these implications of competence, most college composition teachers expect first-term students to make some adjustments to the writing demands due to the level of discussion and development required in the compositions.

Unlike the writing statistics, the reading scores released by NAEP show a lower level of competence in this area of literacy skills. The 2003 scores (no 2003

scores for writing were given on the website) indicated that eighth graders averaged 258 out of a 0-500 scale while the national average was 261. The 2002 scores for Georgia indicated a one-point lower average for at or above basic level. The 258 average indicates that 69% of eighth graders met or exceeded the basis levels of reading literacy while the national average was 72%. There seems to be some correlation between this national test score and college students' ability to read materials assigned to them in their classes. Chiseri-Strater (1991) agrees: "the close reading of texts . . . is an 'assumed' college literacy skill, based on very little evidence of students' reading abilities, and with no guidance offered on how to accomplish this" (p. 161). Chiseri-Strater's assertion will be one of the major areas for analysis of these students in my study. I plan to look at if, when, and where these assumptions exist in each of the courses listed below.

Also included in this analysis are cognitive theories since they play such an influential role in literacy. In an article posted on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) website, Kyllonen (2005) asserts that "a wide range of non-cognitive factors---attitudes, learning skills, performance factors, and affective competencies---both affect students' educational experience and outcomes and are affected by education" (p. 4). As we consider college preparedness, part of the equation must include psychological readiness as well as the students' literacy practices themselves.

Stephanie

Calculus I

Since Calculus 1 was review for her, Stephanie wanted to devote most of her free time to a important course for her major; she had reported that her Computers and Engineering class was all new, from the vocabulary to the concepts, and to become an insider in that course the way that she was with Calculus 1, Stephanie knew that she would have to master the basic concepts. As educational psychologists would say, Stephanie belongs to the mastery goal-oriented classification of learners: she was "willing to put forth a lot of effort to 'master' a skill or concept . . .work very hard, persist in the face of difficulty and frustration, . . . take risks and try things that they don't already know how to do, all in the service of mastering the task at hand" (Svinicki, 2005). Perhaps because she had more time than classmates in Calculus 1 to focus on her teacher rather than on new material, Stephanie recognized her teacher's way of presenting the material to the class; she could tell he was good at what he did by identifying his teaching methods.

For the short time that Stephanie stayed in this course, she did the homework, though as I reported in the previous chapter, she did not do each problem as thoroughly as T6 demanded. Consequently, her homework grade suffered. Carroll (2002) and others remind us that "If learners merely repeat tasks at which they are already proficient, no development occurs" (p. 25); thus, Stephanie had little motivation to give her complete effort on something she already knew how to do. However, Stephanie's perceptions and demonstrations

of the appropriate literacy practices seemed to match her professor's expectations: she came to class, always prepared and ready to take careful notes. She kept herself attentive in spite of being bored. Her familiarity of the material made her an "insider" to this particular academic community (Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1993). Kutz's study contains observations that apply to more than just writers; it's about students as learners. Stephanie was an insider to the world of Calculus. She could explain to me why we need Calculus, something most students new to a community cannot usually articulate:

> Cal, to me, is a foundation for other classes . . . Cal is just like a whole new thing to start over on that's a foundation for other engineering things like differential equations cuz you build up; you learn the formulas, which are called integrals; you learn how to if you have functions, so you need the basis of algebra and trig, how to find the area of that underneath the line, above the line, if you have a 3-D thing and then you learn how. You're actually learning how to make things. Its' just that foundation for way higher level [applications]. (9 November 2004)

As with writers who "know their own competence [and] discovered it long ago," this student was comfortable with the discourse and the content (Kutz, Groden,& Zamel, 1993, p.7).

English 1101

Stephanie had admitted in one of our interviews that English was not her strongest area, but she honestly enjoyed being in the course. Her love of reading kept her racing ahead of the assigned pages. She sat quietly in class, not

speaking unless called upon, but I witnessed how thoroughly she answered her quizzes. It seems that her literacy confidence was stronger in reading where, as Russell (2002) explains the term “discipline-specific literacy,” Stephanie understood “how the community interprets its texts, those shared understandings . . . which connect text to context” (p. 13) and could have thorough discussions with her teacher---in writing---on the quizzes. She reported that she found predicting the quiz questions easy, but she could not do the same for possible writing assignments. Yet, when given her choices for major writing assignments, Stephanie was always enthusiastic, often finding it hard to choose from all the possibilities. Berthoff’s synopsis (1990) of Freire’s term “conscientization” captures much of Stephanie’s joy in learning: “a pedagogy of knowing converts learners to agents who are actively aware of what they are doing” (p. 188). In interviews Stephanie revealed her sense of adventure with language as she practiced her teacher’s suggestions for making some “cool” stylistic changes in sentences.

Perhaps part of her interest also emerged because of the “multiple opportunities to use all . . . language processes to interact with and internalize new concepts, ideas, and information,” which then “increase[d] interest and improve[d] learning” (Stephens & Brown, 2000, p. 4). For each assigned popular novel (Lamott’s *Bird by Bird*, Hornby’s *About a Boy*, and Koontz’s *Watchers*), students used their individual reading styles to approach the text, followed by quizzes as well as discussions about the information, and then they read each other’s paper drafts based on some idea connected to the reading. Additionally,

because Stephanie was an avid reader, she and the teacher experienced a "shared purpose" (enjoyment of reading), which, according to Kutz (2005) "is more important than shared knowledge or shared ways." Not just for Stephanie, the course offered strategies and time for every student to become involved in the literacy practices expected in English 1101.

Stephanie's love of reading maintained her enthusiasm as she struggled somewhat with her essays that never earned the "A" ranking. Frank Smith's (1994) theory that "the key to learning about writing from reading is to read like a writer" (p. 195) might explain the situation. Her essays demonstrated the usual areas for improvement found in most Composition I students: word choice and development of details to fully explain her points---the weaknesses that occur when writers do not anticipate what their reader might need to know. Teacher comments included, "Tell me why each one seemed like a good choice. . . . Check out this cool way to combine these ideas . . . Poor girl. . . How terrible" that invited conversation on the personal and academic level. Instead of marking sentence level errors, E4 made comments that both addressed the writing but also the students' stories as well, creating more rapport with the student (See Appendix E). After receiving graded work back, consequently, Stephanie enthusiastically applied the information offered by E4 to her future compositions and try new techniques, such as using another person's voice in the piece or using humor. These applications of new techniques illustrate Emig's (1983) theory of developmental errors versus mistakes:

> Developmental errors contrast readily with mistakes in that developmental errors forward learning while mistakes impede it. Developmental errors have two characteristics that mistakes do not: 1) they are bold, chance-taking; 2) and they are rational, intelligent" (p. 143).

Stephanie was eager to try new "rational, intelligent" approaches to convey her ideas, and the teacher's corrections of sentence-level and content problems guided her in her writing development. Because she is an enthusiastic learner and an avid reader, she is "more likely . . . to reflect over engagements in written language" (Birnbaum, p. 36). By the end of the term essay exam, Stephanie reported that the reader might find humor useful: "I kinda tried to have fun with that and make it funny while I'm telling my job [at Adventure Awnings]." Without the humor the reader might be bored, and Stephanie, as a reader, knew how dull that kind of writing could be, so she took the risk to keep her audience interested in the story.

Her risk-taking on her final essay exam demonstrates what Smith (1994) says any learner needs: "engagement [which] requires a reaching toward the learning opportunities, not in the sense of strain or effort but in the sense of an openness, often characterized simply as 'interest'" (p. 191). Stephanie was open to trying new strategies, abandoning techniques that had not been as successful for her in previous activities. Because multiple genres were offered for students to convey their ideas in this class, Stephanie had "a way . . . to interrogate analytically how writers get positional within these textured desires to act at the same time as they enable writers to articulate and fulfill these desires as

recognizable, meaningful, consequential actions" (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 18). She also trusted her teacher that risk-taking was encouraged in English 1101. Some educational psychologists would categorize Stephanie's sense of engagement and thus her improvement in writing skill as "mastery goal orientation," a type of "general motivation theory, which refers to the fact that the type of goal toward which a person is working has a tremendous impact on how they pursue the goal" (Svinicki 2005). This idea of persistence and risk-taking is not only a part of Stephanie's desire to master the craft of writing, but it is also part of the academic literacy expectations that we teachers have and often forget to help students work through in order to become more skilled at reading and writing.

Gil

Economics 2105

Gil sat towards the front, he told me, in order to see the board clearly, and he wrote down only the things the teacher wrote down. He did not pre-read assignments unless there were a chance for a quiz, a habit developed over his high school career. Though not as organized as Stephanie's notes, Gil's notes had chapter numbers but not dates. He placed information neatly on every line, for three or four lines, and then he left a blank line or two. There were no underlined areas to indicate how information was grouped together, no marginal comments of his own, just the notes that T3 wrote on the board. The only indication of personal reflection seemed to be four exclamation marks after a formula explaining how the economy can fall. One additional mark perhaps

represents daydreaming: a outline of three flames in the middle of the page of notes. No words or symbols connected the flames to the other notes.

Gil's study strategy was to begin a few days before the test; he re-read his notes, and read all four chapters that would be included on the exam. At that time, he wrote some additional notes from the textbook if he thought they seemed important, though he could not tell me how he discerned significant information. The electronic quizzes seemed to give him great difficulty, and he blamed the low scores for bringing his course grade low. He reported that the teacher's terms confused him since they differed from the text's terminology. Blaming his lack of skill on his teacher or with WebCT, Gil fits Cashin's (1979) description of the unmotivated student: they "resist new information, tend to make snap decisions, use categorical reasoning (good or bad) rather than an evaluative continuum, and freeze their judgment even when new information suggests the wisdom of revising it." His confusion with new vocabulary and reliance on high school reading and study strategies illustrate resistance. I want to remind the reader that Gil was the only student in this study who did not want to come to college, and he seemed to be the least likely to adjust his strategies by choice.

Baxter Magolda (1999) and others (Svinicki, 2005; Kyllonen, 2005) explain students' resistance to change, like Gil's, as using "particular meaning-making structures until they both encounter and receive assistance in resolving discrepancies between experience and those structures . . .they use the one they have learned until it no longer works effectively" (p. 63). For exams, Gil relied on

learning the exact words from his teacher combined with remembering the reading from the chapters just a few days before the test date. When he studied on his own, Gil was often unsure about what to do or how to read the material. As an “absolute knower,” he expected to be told exactly what to know and how to do so (Baxter Magolda, 1999). He did not recognize that, “just as in writing, clarity is not what we start with in reading but what we work toward” (Elbow, 2004, p. 13). Whereas Stephanie felt confident in comparing and reconciling her knowledge with that of her teacher, Gil had not reached that level of awareness about information.

During week 11, he made his first appointment with T3 for extra help. Gil’s slow reaction to seeking help can be explained through educational psychology’s research category of Performance Goal Orientation: by attempting homework and studying, Gil would work “toward the goal of appearing competent or at least avoiding appearing incompetent” and was “less likely to persist if [he made] an error or have to put forth a lot of effort because either of these two outcomes would label [him] as incompetent” (Svinicki, 2005). In the early part of the term, he believed that he would be successful even though he was not expecting to earn an A in the course. Because he could read, Gil assumed that he was comprehending and making meanings of the material in ways that, unfortunately, did not help him make the necessary transition to higher orders of thinking such as synthesizing a variety of material that his teacher expected. Waiting to ask for help became part of a “downward spiral of poor grades and lack of engagement with other people at college” that many students experience when learning to

learn becomes too overwhelming (Light, 2001, p. 36). His first low grade report led to lower and lower scores as the term went on, and other than his roommate on whom Gil relied for meeting other students, he seemed cut off from a positive academic experience. He had no classmates to study with and little motivation to meet with his teachers.

I am also inferring that some of his reticence in seeking help derived from his own disbelief that he could not make sense of the information on his own. Early on he admitted to feeling less than prepared for college expectations, but that acknowledgment referred to the task of writing. Gil felt confident about being able to read and being able to remember information that his teachers talked about: “Reading’s not all that hard. I can comprehend pretty good” (8 November 2004). In contrast, Piscitelli reminds us that “while an effective memory may be impressive and it may even help you get by on tests, it does not indicate that you understand the material” (p. 180). In his interviews, Gil talked about his high school history teacher reading and talking about information that would then be found on tests. However, in Economics 2105, Gil was expected to combine information and decide for himself what kind of meaning to make of it all.

Gil said that he wanted to study with a classmate but could not recruit anyone, in part because most students in that class had to rush off to the next class and had no time to make plans with people they did not know already. He didn’t know anyone in this course, and on two of the five occasions that I observed the class, he did not come. Perhaps he did not feel he belonged since he reminded me on several occasions that he skipped more often in larger

classes, the ones with no opportunity to meet people. Because “the relationship between the individual and the environment is a transactive one,” Gil seemed to have been prevented from forming any healthy relationship in this environment, whether from his own choices or from his peers’ (Eisner, 1994, p. 47). As reported in Chapter 4, his classmate didn’t offer to help him when he attempted to ask her for help.

English 1101

Gil enjoyed class in spite of his acknowledged weakness in writing; consequently, he reported in the interviews that the small group interaction helped him understand after hearing what others wrote and discussed about the assignments. He seemed, “through writing of drafts of papers that required [him] to integrate theory with evidence,” to “achieve the insights that moved [him] to complex reasoning about the topic under consideration” (Sternglass, 1997, p. 295). The smaller class size of 22 as opposed to his Economics class size of 60 seemed to help him feel more a part of the environment, and his comfort allowed him to have a bit more time to learn what goes in to the writing process. Group work helped him immensely. Struggling by himself with a first draft that he knew needed work, Gil “read through it quick-like” (17 September 2004). His strategy echoed many other students in English 1101 as well as one particular student in Cindy Selfe’s case study about reading as a writing strategy: “his impulse as a highly apprehensive writer was to finish the piece as quickly as possible” (Selfe, 1986, p. 59). As he explained to me, he rushed through revising his own draft since he did not know what to look for, and luckily, he enjoyed learning from his

peers by hearing new approaches to the writing assignment as a result of the interaction.

Gil reported that he sometimes sought help from E1 in her office, but most often he relied on her written comments from the preliminary drafts. On the draft submitted for this study, E1 showed Gil that he needed the most help with development of ideas to go beyond generalizations (See Appendix F). Her remarks urged more substance, more evidence and analysis, and clearer writing, crucial comments for Gil's development as a writer. "Once you revise your intro and clarify your thesis---your reason for writing—begin each body paragraph with a statement of support of your thesis," E1 noted. At the end of the paragraph she tells him, "Now clinch paragraph effectively and move to your next body paragraph." Also sprinkled among the development suggestions were citation corrections and word choice corrections. During our mid-term dinner Gil spoke about his surprise at how time-consuming the writing class had become; he had had to cut down on going to the gym. He felt like he was writing all the time.

As a performance goal-oriented student (Svinicki, 2005), Gil's comments suggest that he did not recognize that writing over time would strengthen his literacy competence; his goal was to earn a grade and finish the class. Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003) remind first year college students that "when you are learning something for the first time, it helps to focus on the process of learning, not the outcome" (p. 29), but that suggestion is more easily said than done. Through her strategies of requiring multiple drafts, using peer and teacher comments on those drafts, including readings to complement the writing

activities, E1 attempted to help students understand the learning process that Vanderstoep and Pintrich refer to. When students like Gil, however, have to adjust to new ways of thinking about writing and reading while struggling to maintain above-average grades, allowing time to appreciate the learning process appears as more of a luxury than a practical matter for most first year students (Carroll, 2002, p. 118).

Tristan

Economics 2105

Tristan told me how quickly each seventy-five minute lecture went by due to T2's humor and booming voice. With no note-filled boards, students stayed focused on this entertaining teacher, and if for some reason they were too focused on the presentation and not on the note-taking, T2 would remind them that writing things down would benefit their test scores. Part of his teaching style also involved repetition of ideas through multiple examples, perhaps including comedic stories about his brother Vinny or Crest toothpaste. He was also serious when he needed to be, often reminding students to write down something he thought particularly important. Early in the term, T2 used the overhead screen to show students how to read and respond to test questions in the future, also reminding them that study guides were just that: guides and not exact answers on the test.

Tristan enjoyed the course because of the teacher, but she did not like the 9:30 time, so often she and her friend attended his once-per-week 6:30 evening class instead. She liked the choice of times since she could work around her

demanding schedule with Rush requirements. In class she chose to sit towards the front and came prepared with textbook, notebook, and writing tools of pens and colored highlighters. She took several pages of notes each time and stopped from time to time to highlight some of what she had written down. Her notes from October 25 contain the date, a large “3” at the top right corner of each page, I assume to indicate the textbook chapter, underlined sections, notes put into statement or question format, symbols and abbreviations. In the left margin on the first sample page she had written “Potential Test Question,” a clear recognition of significant information and an easy way for her to find particular keyed ideas for exam preparation.

Eric Hobson (2004), in “Getting Students to Read,” acknowledges that “faculty face the stark and depressing challenge of facilitating learning when over 70% of the students will not have read assigned course readings,” and Tristan, like Gil, fit into this statistic. She relied on attending class and taking notes, but reading the chapters only when it was time to study for exams. In an early interview, she admitted to not liking reading, only magazines, and since her motivation was more achievement-oriented than mastery-oriented, putting time into becoming a more proficient reader in the academic setting was not a priority. Hobson continues: “students turn into consummate pragmatists, determining the minimum reading investment that will produce desired course accomplishment.” For Tristan, attending class and taking notes were more important for earning the grades she needed to make the Dean’s List. Her strategies seemed to work; she enjoyed the class and earned an above-average course grade at semester’s end.

When it was time to study, Tristan always worked with her girlfriend who purposely was in the same class; however, she confessed that neither of them knew exactly how to study. Similar to her note-taking, Tristan relied on T2's interesting stories or examples as well as his habit of asking "see me workin'" to decide what information to write down in order to recall the information later. Since she did not pre-read the chapters, she was not reading critically nor note-taking with any organized pattern; she had yet to create "a dialect of construing and constructing" in order to listen "in deliberate anticipation" (Berthoff, 1990, p. 111). The organization of her notes came chronologically from T2's order of presenting the information; she did not recognize his "outline" format that he used, but she did recognize the need to highlight her notes in order to make some of the information stand out from the rest. While studying, Tristan and her friend talked about the material but didn't know how to predict the test questions even though she also used the WebCT quizzes and reviews set up by T2 to help reinforce the course's concepts. Richard Light (2001) tells us that students in his study "who were able to share their problems and to seek help . . . all, without exception, where able to work at developing strategies to improve academic performance" (p. 36). In addition he reports that "those students who study outside of class in small groups of four to six, even just once a week, benefit enormously" (p. 52). The practice of electronic reinforcement, combined with having a study partner, may have allowed Tristan, unlike Gil, time to learn how to take the exams since she ended up with a B in the course.

English 1101

Tristan chose her peer group based on an acquaintance with one of the males who was dating a friend of hers, again illustrating a significant reliance on social connections. Unfortunately, Tristan had admitted that they "were slackers." They hardly ever brought drafts for peer activities and talked to her as she tried to concentrate in class. Early in the term, she had sent me an electronic copy of her draft to make comments on, and I did, but that was the last time she had asked me for help. In our second interview she had explained that she often procrastinated to the point that there was no time to send her draft to me; she relied on friends to look over her paper. Part of her procrastination, especially during the first half of the term, came from her sorority-rushing activities, and she acknowledged her frustration with having to spend more time on Greek than on academic activities.

She gave me a copy of her first and final (graded) draft for Essay #1 (See Appendix G). In the early draft, teacher comments suggest development ideas and personal reactions like "Wow! That truly was a freak accident . . . What a shock!" The graded draft, which earned a B, contained comments such as "Revise so your ending is more effective. Begin by clarifying vague pronouns." E1 allowed students to continue revising after a paper was graded, though she did not require that they do so.

Tristan told me that she would work more on the early drafts after E1 had made her comments. Her reticence may have been part of having to learn new ways of writing and the expectations that come with it. As Elbow (2004) tells us,

> writing promotes more psychological and physical engagement than reading . . .reading tends to imply, ‘Sit still and pay attention,’ whereas writing tends to imply, ‘Get in there and *do* something.” Reading means that the teacher and the author chose the words; writing means that the student chose the words . . . Reading is consumption; writing is production” (p. 10).

As novice writers learn more about their learning and their writing, the change in habits of mind can be difficult. On future early drafts, she was often confused about the assignment, but she did not ask her teacher for help. Tristan was not yet comfortable with the expectations for structuring or discussing her ideas, so she seemed to put little effort into the first draft or two using her own ideas: “the problems students face in academic writing are not primarily grammatical . . . it is in struggling with these tasks [new genres] that they develop new skills” (Carroll, 2002, pg. 118). Like Gil and countless other first-term college students whose “’normal’ ways of reading and writing acquired through popular culture as well as through schooling are challenged as they move into a new setting” (Carroll, p. 119), Tristan seemed to see the assignments as get-them-done-quickly instead of recognizing and therefore taking advantage of learning by drafting.

Recognizing Tristan’s confusion with the *Time* magazine assignment given late in the term, I asked her how she had organized her paper. She gave very basic information. “I’m comparing advertisements, so I print them all out and look at a Ford and a Ford and see what the slogans are. I just compare like that,” indicating that she didn’t seem to know how to create a comparison/contrast

paper. Because E1 built in several smaller activities for individual and small groups, she gave students many opportunities to shape their papers. However, Tristan remained confused. It seems that teachers' "own varied systems can oppose and interact with the systems of the students and make the classroom arena less a battlefield and more a funhouse of facing distorted mirrors" (Haswell, p. 35). What appeared approachable to E1 became a complicated distortion of a comparison/contrast paper. Even though Tristan had a foundation in reading and writing, this college-level assignment forced her

> to learn some new 'basic skills,' including reading and evaluating difficult texts that offer diverse viewpoints on complex issues . . . integrating new knowledge with personal experience and values, understanding and employing the conventions of new genres of writing, and writing as an 'expert' for an often critical audience" (Carroll, 2002, p. 119).

Tristan's confusion also created frustration for her. Writing was hard work, as Piscitelli (2004) says about all learning: "True learning will usually cause some frustration. After all, learning indicates a change in behavior" (p. 180). Like Gil, Tristan seemed to resist these more complex literacy expectations. Since she expressed enjoyment in reading only magazines, the demands of using information for analysis of a change in views over a period of time in the magazine's history demanded more than reading for entertainment that she was accustomed to. Jeanne Henry's (1995) students shared much of Tristan's attitude about reading: "reading was not something they chose to do" (Newkirk, foreword). Tankersley (2003) reports that "reading and writing activities build

reading and thinking skills in students and go hand in hand to increase student performance in reading" (p. 136). Tristan's hesitance to work on the draft because she was confused illustrates some of the new literacy expectations she had to adjust to.

Tristan's lack of critical thinking practice served as the central difficulty for getting the assignment developed. Added to this academic literacy expectation, the type of reading assignment implies a certain level of comprehension, yet "only practice and experience make students proficient and insightful readers. But neither teachers nor students have the luxury of the time this takes," Henry continues (p. xvii). The longer that the semester continued, the more Tristan's goal orientation became what Svinicki (2005) calls Work Avoidance Orientation, when a student "will perform only as much as they absolutely have to." Perhaps in part because Tristan did not enjoy English and in part because of the overwhelming nature of new and more demanding types of writing assignments, she avoided the work because she did not see the value in it or a way to achieve any high level of success in her early drafts.

Philip

Music Appreciation

Though admitting to having a difficult time catching on to the demands of listening, Philip adjusted well to the rigors of the course. He never missed class and chose to sit away from the more talkative students so that he could concentrate. Constantly keeping his pen moving, whether in actual notes or doodles, he worked hard at concentrating on the lectures as well as the music

during class in spite of his ADHD. The notes he submitted for this study had the date at the top of each page. He used words, phrases, arrows pointing to other information, parenthesis, circled words, underlining and bulleted marks to organize his notes. In the left margin of the third page he had an elaborately detailed set of three checkerboard-patterned “doodles,” which he had explained in an interview was a method he used for concentration while the teacher was talking. Like Stephanie, Philip had created clear note-taking strategies that fit his learning style.

On the other hand, organization of materials was not his strong point; his notebook, by midterm, was crammed with papers in no specific pattern. Philip did manage his time well, keeping track of which assignments were due when so that he could budget his time wisely. As he told me in an interview, he tried to get his work done right after class so that he could have free time later in the evening or weekends. His strategy for studying for the exams might not be what faculty expect---the continuous reviewing of materials, reading ahead, taking time to be thorough on the exam---but it worked for him. Piscatelli outlines six purposes for college-level reading: answer specific questions, apply reading material in a new situation, find details, get a message, evaluate reading materials, entertain. Philip’s choice to read the text as a way to study for the exam suggests that he reads to answer specific questions (on the take-home portion of the test) and apply the material in a new way in order to be ready for the next day’s in-class listening and writing portion of the exam (p. 125). As Nist & Kirby (1989) explain, students assess what they need to do within the time parameters and other

course demands; then they decide how much effort and time they can devote to any particular assignment.

When he worked on the writing assignment, Philip made sure to email T1 with questions, and he also stopped by her office to be sure he was following instructions. Additionally, just as he did with English assignments, he began the writing days ahead of deadlines to ensure that he completed the requirement and followed instructions as best he knew how. His efforts suggest an attitude of get the work done; do your best to get a good grade.

English 1101

I remembered Philip's confidence in his writing abilities, what Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003) call "judgments of your capabilities for the task" (p. 41), from our first group meeting at the start of the term, so I was curious to watch him in class, the one he shared with Tristan and Gil. He sat in one of the front two rows in the computer lab, and when E1 assigned an activity, Philip started it immediately. Typing seemed to help him stay on task, immediately applying the concept E1 was introducing. As noted earlier, he rushed through several projects, which at times caused him to misread paper assignments, and after teacher comments he sometimes had to start over, frustrated with the work. Philip shared with Gil and Tristan a desire for speed for finishing rather than seeing the connection between planning, writing, thinking, and reviewing. As he and most of the others in this study reported, just getting the work finished was all they had to worry about in their high school experience, so they often completed the assignment in a few minutes before class in order to turn

something in. This routine became a habit of mind. However, in spite of the speed to finish, Philip was also cognizant of writing's need for multiple drafts, which required time to produce, so he made sure to begin his writing days before drafts were due. In group activities, he would read his draft aloud as well as comment on peer work, illustrating his acceptance of group response, which suggests that he valued input from those in addition to his teacher's. He seemed to stay focused in spite of the noise of group work along with the hum of the twenty-four computers, taking time to comment on group members' drafts after each one read his or her composition.

His actual paper drafts had more development than Gil's or Tristan's. His sample draft for this study was three-and-a-half pages long. E1's comments included more "good" or "go further," suggesting his grasp of the assignment. As Selfe (1986) explains, Philip's being "low writing apprehensive" probably allowed him to structure his ideas more easily; he had no "doubt-interference" to encourage avoidance of the task, a symptom illustrated in his peers in this study (p. 48). In spite of his confidence, E1 still had to ask, "So? Clarify how this paragraph relates to your overall purpose for writing. . . . Elaborate? What was going on more specifically?" Like Stephanie, who was also confident and persistent in working on the tasks at hand, and because Philip was a competent reader, the writing came easier in the sense of comprehending how to design or structure his papers. Like the others, though, he still needed work on developing his ideas beyond superficial discussion. He was not yet ready to write like a

reader; this type of critical thinking expected more from his literacy practice than he was accustomed to doing.

Renee

Biology 1130

Renee never missed class, always sat down in the rows close to the front and saved her twin sister a seat. Illustrating Cashin's (1979) description of "positively motivated students" Renee seemed to have "stronger and more positive self image"; her neat notes, including the date on each page, seemed to suggest a sense of order. She used every line, mixing complete sentence-length and phrase-length, to convey ideas. Numbers, bullets, asteriks also drew attention to particular areas within her notes. In the left margin of her October 20th notes, Renee wrote "Evidence" next to several lines and "Test Question" next to another. Like Tristan, Renee left evidence of her connection between the material being discussed in class with her necessary information for the upcoming test.

In an interview, she confessed that she was following a more focused and dedicated approach to school expectations than she had in high school, and her efforts, like Philip's, added support to the notion that "sophomores who had a great first year typically talked about realizing, when they got to college, that they had to think about how to spend their time" (Light, 2001, p. 24). She pre-read on a regular basis, even if she could not finish all of the chapter, and found this information helpful for following the professor better during the lecture. This routine explained her achievement goal orientation: "the type of goal toward

which a person is working has a tremendous impact on how they peruse the goal" (Svinicki, 2005). She seemed to be at least goal-oriented if not mastery oriented since she made the attempt to read ahead; she recognized the significance of making connections between text and teacher. Her prereading helped her to "read critically---which is to say when we read for meaning" (Berthoff, p. 108). Although she was not able to predict test questions other than assuming the bold lettered vocabulary would be on it, she retrieved past WebCT quizzes to review, helping her "interpret what one believes" in order to "restructure" her beliefs about what is significant for the course (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 14). Getting her homework done daily was also in her routine. Even though she did not earn A grades on quizzes, Renee demonstrated what Vandersteop & Pintrich reported as the elements of complete motivation: choice behavior, effort, persistence, cognitive engagement, and achievement (pp. 40-41). During the semester she maintained a disciplined approach to homework, class attendance, and studying---complete cognitive engagement---and by the end of the term, she reported earning a B in the course.

English 1101

As with her Biology class, Renee chose to sit near the front of the room, her text or notebook out, and she was ready for any information needing to be written down, her pen or pencil usually in her hand during the entire class time. Though she did not volunteer to speak, she always moved to see the classmate who might be discussing an idea. In spite of, or maybe because of, her reserved behavior, Renee seemed to enjoy and do well in the course. Renee's learning

style benefited her experiences in a classroom that included new types of writing assignments and much more peer involvement than she reported having participated in during high school.

As major paper assignments were given, Renee made sure to write drafts for her teacher to see and discuss with her, and she also came to me for help on two different papers. Perhaps her habit of mind which encouraged her to sit back and listen rather than participate actively in discussions allowed her the time to absorb, consider, synthesize, and just plain comprehend the issues; the more she understood the material, the issues, and the assignments expectations, the easier the writing became for her: “The most effective learning subcommunities involve students in assessing their own literacy development while providing the scaffolding necessary to develop new skills” (Carroll, 2002, p.129). As Nist & Kirby (1989) explain, students assess what they need to do within the time parameters and other course demands before deciding how much time to devote to any one assignment. Like the others in this study, Renee’s drafts were written as a writer without the reader in mind, so her papers had teacher comments suggesting places to add details or clarify details already included. Renee submitted a first and graded draft, the first essay she wrote in English 1101 (See Appendix H). On several occasions, E3 wrote “elaborate” on Renee’s draft and included a few word choice corrections. The only major content suggestion came in the conclusion: “not a moral to the story but a reflection.” Renee needed to assess or evaluate the narrative, but she had shifted the intention from reflection to story-telling techniques to end her piece.

Renee said at semester's end that English was her favorite class. She liked the teacher and the interaction with classmates. Her motivation to learn seemed to encourage her to get the extra, outside-of-class help, especially since she told the group at our initial meeting that she knew she had a weak background both in studying and in writing. For paper assignments, she always had the required draft on the day expected, and she also responded to any electronic peer reviews that E3 expected to be done before class time. However, Renee's definition of a weak writer meant the grammar and punctuation; she didn't seem to feel less confident about the ideas asked for in assignments. She seemed to recognize that past high school habits had to change since "it might be your preference—what you like—but that does not mean it is how you learn" (Piscitelli, 2004, p. 32). Renee seemed to exemplify the intent of Vanderstoep & Pintrich's (2003) reminder to concentrate on the learning, not the outcome. She didn't seem to be obsessed with grades as much as she seemed interested in how she learned from her teacher as well as from her early drafts.

Summary

All courses described in this chapter required significant amounts of reading, and much of that reading required students to go beyond memorization of facts. Most of the volunteers had difficulty adapting to this higher-level literacy practice. Teachers expected students to read on their own, sometimes on material not specifically covered in class. Particularly in non-English courses, if the teacher did address the assigned material, it was highlighted or referred to but not analyzed or discussed in depth. Even in their English 1101 classes,

students had to read, take a quiz over the material, and discuss the text *after* the quiz. None of the teachers in any of the courses spent time teaching explicitly about reading strategies. These practices contrast what most students in this study described as their high school experiences where the answers were often spelled out for them or where little effort was put forth in order to earn high grades. All but Stephanie reported not being expected to predict exam questions; they were often told what to study for in all of their high school courses.

At the university, the shift of responsibility for comprehending the teachers' and the courses' expectations had significant effects on the students. Many remained perplexed or in denial of their inability to comprehend or synthesize information from the text and course lectures. A few sought out help from the teachers, but often they did not or did so too late.

The students' English 1101 courses not only included new or higher expectations for reading; they also included several intensive writing assignments, which demanded writing multiple drafts and often learning new technology skills. None of the students said that, at the beginning of the semester, they enjoyed writing. Only Stephanie became quite enthusiastic about the composing process. Because of English 1101's requirement of 6000-8000 words and its more intimate class size of 22 students rather than most other courses that often seated 60 to 200 students, the volunteers had to produce work more often in order to participate in English class activities. The combination of reading, writing, and discussing during the process of each assignment seemed to allow students more time to acquire necessary literacy practices that they were

expected to demonstrate. In addition, the frequent class discussions and teacher conferences helped them stay up with the information and seemed to create less anxiety as they worked on their compositions. They may not have enjoyed the writing, but most did not seem to convey the same level of anxiety about what to do for homework assignments.

Although the statistics presented at the opening of this chapter may show some correlation to the difficulties that most of the students in this study had with academic literacy expectations with reading and test-taking, several "noncognitive factors" (Kyllonen, 2005) also influenced their persistence in learning new material and adjusting their literacy practices. All of the students seemed to report a realistic awareness of their strengths and weaknesses with note-taking, writing, reading, and studying as they entered the university, yet few understood how influential their self-confidence and attitude toward learning would be.

CHAPTER 6

SIGNIFICANCE

"Perhaps what, as teachers, we need from research is that it should guide our thinking rather than our actual practice." (Britton, 1992)

Overview

I started this inquiry wondering why some first-term college students had trouble adapting to academic literacy expectations. My fifteen years of teaching writing at Georgia Southern has allowed me to work with hundreds of talented, eager students who want to succeed. When many do not do as well as they had hoped, two thirds losing the HOPE scholarship, I remain puzzled since I have seen their abilities through their writing and our discussions. Additionally, over the 2004 fall semester I observed nine students, five of whom became the center of this research, and witnessed teachers dedicated to their students' success at the university. However, the disconnect between the talent and potential of students and the difficulties in their adjusting to academic literacy expectations continued. As the information in the previous chapters reveal, perceptions on the part of students and teachers played a significant role in literacy practices-- those accepted, adapted, or rejected.

Literacy scholars, linguists, composition specialists, educational researchers, and psychologists seem to share many of my questions about how students learn as well as how they adjust to college-level expectations. Teaching assignments combined with interactions with my students have allowed me to join the professional conversation. My eleven years as a developmental studies and freshman-orientation teacher have helped me understand how students

learn. My involvement with the National Writing Project has allowed me to teach and learn from other professionals who use writing as a tool for learning in their classrooms. My doctoral studies at IUP, combined with my writing project experiences, have given me the theoretical information to apply to my pedagogy. The collective knowing accumulated throughout my career also led me to my major research questions and reflections:

- How do these students perceive their own literacy competence?
- How do students new to the Georgia Southern University environment adapt to the academic literacy expectations in various classes?
- What are Georgia Southern's literacy expectations or assumptions for first-term students?

Findings which address these three questions will be discussed individually in this chapter.

Student Perceptions

First, let's look at the disconnect through new students' eyes: not only are they being asked to give up their identities as children living at home with their parents, but they are now expected to think like parents: multi-tasking, assessing the educational demands for four to six classes with unfamiliar people, prioritizing demands of learning---how much can they get done in a twenty-four or forty-eight hour period, for example, before their next class meeting. When under stress, they often make poor decisions or no decisions; they are numb. In addition,

students in this study had to combine their life adjustments with their classroom adjustments.

This study reveals that the perceived gap in college student readiness is not a high school problem in the general sense. The problem is a cognitive shift: levels of literacy skills and the routine practice of them take time to develop and never stop developing (Clinton, 2002; Baxter Magolda, 1999; Sommers, 2004; Sternglass, 1997). Stephanie, Philip, and Renee immediately tried to set a schedule for doing their homework; they also asked questions as soon as they felt confused. They seemed to understand that they would have adjustments to make and used time management to help them gauge their comfort with assignments. Though all five admitted in the first group interviews that they did not feel fully prepared for college-level expectations, only Gil and Tristan displayed resistance to learning or trying new ways of studying or writing. For Gil, the large class size and the expectation that he would read on his own created anxiety that affected his motivation to try his best in Economics; he had more motivation to keep trying in his English 1101 class where he had consistent feedback from peers and teachers. Tristan's resistance caused her to procrastinate in English 1101; she relied heavily on teacher feedback for each assignment rather than asking questions during her writing process. In Economics, Tristan's making sure that she had friends in class allowed her to feel more comfortable with the course expectations. Unlike Gil, though, she did ask questions as soon as she felt confusion, but she did so in the teacher's office and not during class.

With each new content area come new genres in which to read and write. Approaching these genres requires different ways of making meaning and applying meaning. This shift in literacy expectations is asking students to take on new academic identities (Gee, 1989; Haswell, 1991; Smith, 1994) and leave the old self behind. Most need time to adjust. Stephanie was the only one of the five students used in this study who embraced taking on new identities in writing. She looked forward to trying her teacher's suggestions in order to include humor and voice. The others, for English, also made changes in their drafts, but their reactions came as students who felt there was a clear right and wrong way to write and that their teacher would tell them exactly what to change (Baxter-Magolda, 1999).

In a sense, this shift requires that students go through the same type of grieving stages as they would if they suffered an actual death: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Memorial Hospital, 2005). Gil and Tristan seemed to experience this sense of loss of self as they tried to adapt to reading, writing, and studying demands. The habits from high school were not working for these students. Tristan complained that her room was too messy and noisy to study in, but she did not want to change her routine to use the library or another quieter area. Gil, too, did not choose to stay on campus to do his work; instead he waited until he arrived at his off-campus apartment to read and do the assignments. Then, if he needed technology to complete activities, he had no tools to work with and chose not to return to campus where hundreds of computers were available. Gil and Tristan needed time to realize that learning is

not an isolating experience; genuine learning can also be slow and frustrating. However, they perceived frustration as failure rather than as a sign that they were being introduced to new information and new ways of working with that information. With the reading assignments in particular, these two students did not see how similar the literacy practices were to those they participated in with writing: “If the first priority for writers is . . . to learn to tolerate chaos, then analogously the reader must learn to tolerate ambiguity, to allow for competing meanings to develop” (Berthoff, 1990, p. 110). As they experience these difficulties, students need to be reassured that discomfort is part of a natural process; they are not flawed individuals because they don’t “get it” quickly. For many first-term students, however, admitting to confusion means rethinking who they are as learners.

We are also asking students to infer information in ways that they have never been asked to before, and we are expecting them to be proficient immediately at this task. We expect fluent academic literacy before students new to the university environment have had time to recognize what the higher order academic literacy expectations being placed on them actually are, let alone have practiced enough to become fluent.

Most of the literacy studies seem to focus on either writing or reading, but rarely both. Kutz, Groden, and Zamel (1993) come closest to recognizing and addressing the overall problem for most first-term students: at the university level, when it comes to college courses, teachers expect an almost immediate, discipline-specific fluency in the content area before the students have acquired

basic vocabulary of the discipline. As Kutz, Groden, & Zamel explain, as with language acquisition, we must use language in context, practice it, make mistakes, practice it again; through this process acquisition occurs. However, college faculty often omit the initial stages of learning material (the practicing, making errors, practicing some more before fluency can occur) in their content areas, assuming that students who can read and write will immediately absorb new information and be proficient in Gee's (1989) secondary Discourse, the discourse practiced outside of the home language, the primary Discourse. Unfortunately, what most faculty aren't trained to recognize is that they must not only teach content, but they must also teach the literacy skills that are necessary to encourage learning, before expecting fluency, in their content area. In large, lecture-heavy courses, little time is available to encourage such practice. These skills define Chiseri-Strater's (1991) similar concept concerning academic literacy: "the reading, writing, talking, and thinking patterns of the discipline" (p. 144). We can't assume students automatically transfer skills used to analyze a novel to those skills needed for analyzing a biology text. Teachers know that mature or experienced students use different strategies but forget that, at one time, they had to be shown how to make that shift in thinking.

The students in this study have shown us a glimpse of the greater student population who are young people eager, smart, and ready to learn. In many ways our first term students are prepared; they have the basic literacy skills. Like many of their professors, they expect to catch on quickly and are not only surprised but also disappointed in themselves when they have difficulty. Gil thought that he

had strong reading skills, and his frustration in Economics was obvious through his skipping of class and avoiding asking for help with WebCT assignments. He kept assuming that he would improve on his own. Renee, unlike Gil, used her WebCT quizzes and activities as a tool for learning. She would review what she missed and try to find out why she had chosen a wrong answer; she also knew that attending every Biology class in spite of its overwhelming size was crucial to learning. She could perceive what her teacher felt was important about the material and also learn how her teacher asked questions that might also lead to future test questions. Whether through self-doubt or self-confidence, many students don't ask for help because they can do it on their own, they think.

Just this year, fall 2005, one of my first-term students said to me in a conference that he was disappointed in his math grade. When I asked him if he had discussed the problem with his professor, the student looked quickly at me and then down towards the floor as he said, "I *should* be able to figure it out, ya know?" His remarks reinforced the American work ethic of anyone trying hard enough will succeed (Brooks, 2004, pp. 225-231), but this belief doesn't allow a person to understand that learning is often a social event: we work with others in order to learn and seldom succeed all by ourselves. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (1970) concept illustrates that students at various levels of ability can often best teach each other, but unless this type of social activity is part of most classroom settings, where students learn how to interact to think and speak in ways that encourage learning from others, they will not seek help on their own. They don't see the value; instead, they perceive asking as a sign of

incompetence (Svinicki, 2005). Ironically, the students in this study all reported that they were not “good” in English class, and most said they did not like English either. However, by the end of the term, all expressed that they enjoyed English 1101. Gil, Renee, and Tristan specifically described how influential the small group activities and teacher conferences were for helping them earn above average grades in the course. In spite of Stephanie’s skill and joy in reading, she also reported surprise at how much she looked forward to the writing assignments.

Even if they did not recognize a change in their literacy competence, these students did understand that the writing courses required multiple drafts and thus multiple ways of perceiving and articulating their ideas. Those who were not already readers, in the sense that they read books for pleasure and not just when forced to, had more difficulty making sense of information in their textbooks in all of their classes. Philip, though he said he did not enjoy reading, used his confidence in his literacy skills to adjust more successfully to various course demands than did Gil, who judged his abilities as insufficient.

To analyze student literacy perceptions, then, cognitive theories as well as the composition and reading theories must be referenced. The students’ literacy practices are not just the actual skills used. Their motivation influences the development of or enhances those practices: “Self-authorship means believing one can construct knowledge claims, make one’s own inner psychological life, and regulate relationships with others to maintain one’s own identity” (Baxer-Magolda, 1999, p. 39).

Student Adaptations

Student perceptions echoed much of the faculty's understandings about learning and literacy: Any new content to be learned, any reading or writing assignment given, would be done easily, without any modeling or training about the expectations concerning the information. Even though students in this study came to Georgia Southern with A and B high school averages, they also told me that their previous habits and motivation to do work and/or learn were not going to be effective at college. Some, on the other hand, relied too heavily on old habits, such as waiting to study until a few days before exams rather than reviewing textbooks and notes on a daily basis or highlighting rather than making marginal notes, in part because they did not recognize the inadequacy of those practices. At times, Gil, Philip, and Tristan did not equate reading assignments with a way to learn or a way to study before a lecture; it was a task to finish quickly without having to think carefully. Most did not understand why or how to skim; they felt inadequate when they could not keep up with the reading, often not trying or making excuses since they didn't know what to do with the information before them. They learned to rely on the teacher to explain during lecture, and if that method did not help, students often assumed that the problem was their lack of ability. Only Gil seemed to suggest that a teacher shared any blame for his confusion and low grades.

When students are competent, confident readers like Stephanie and Renee, they have more motivation to persist when tasks become difficult. If they feel comfortable with the reading task, more students try to read daily—before

class lectures rather than after. The students in this study were very aware that time management and doing homework regularly were the necessary changes in their literacy practices. However, they did not always understand how to go about rendering that change; they allotted time to do homework on a daily basis, but they often didn't know how to make meaning of the activity, especially with the reading. In contrast, one of the strengths for most of the students in this study was their ability to "read" their environment; they picked up on teacher signals of repeating key information, idiosyncratic phrasings that indicated important information, and even gauging when it was necessary to read assignments and when to rely on the teacher, ignoring the texts completely. More perceptive strategies that the students did employ with a range of success were establishing routines, trying to ask questions (though outside of class rather than during), trying to take notes the best way that they knew how, attending class, and attempting paper drafts as required in spite of their confusion and self-doubt. These students' attempts to adapt their strategies contradict Nist & Kirby's (1989) suggestion that limited text markings resulted from student laziness (pp. 327-328). Their literacy practices, though perhaps underdeveloped, do exist, and students want to improve those practices; they just need guidance for adapting and learning additional strategies for the diverse academic demands.

Faculty Expectations and Assumptions

There is no question that every one of the faculty in this study care deeply about their fields of expertise as well as about helping their students understand that field. They incorporate a variety of pedagogically sound methods of mixing

visual and audial approaches as well as electronic aids for reinforcing concepts, demonstrating ideas through discussion and writing and reading, allowing humor to complement their lectures, and working one-on-one in conference situations. The list is as varied as are the experts conducting the courses. In spite of their efforts, however, an area overlooked by most college teachers was teaching how to read critically for the particular content areas. Without this academic literacy strategy, students' abilities to pre-read, take notes, or even create writing responses to readings often suffer.

As Patrick Clinton (2002) points out, most teachers assume that students have the literacy skills necessary to read assigned materials since such intensive reading instruction takes place throughout the elementary years through third grade especially, and once learned, they assume, the skill continues to develop. However, reading in high school is never explicitly taught, unless students have been placed in remedial courses. Students are told to read, but few teachers in any field think about teaching their charges how to anticipate the material, a skill Berthoff (1990), McKenna & Robinson (1993), and Tovani (2004) maintain is essential for helping students practice in order to acquire critical thinking skills, which are also considered to be the same as academic literacy skills. Ironically, telling students to read rather than guiding them first forces most of them to develop the opposite habits from what we desire them to practice. We want them to be aggressive, or as Keith Gilyard (1992) terms it "arrogant," in their approach to texts, but we don't explicitly show them how.

It seems that few college faculty outside those trained in education have studied or read any literature on how students learn. The number of universities providing Centers for Excellence in Teaching where workshops on curriculum alignment and explicit teaching methods suggests that college faculty might not have much training in pedagogy. Adding to this assumption is the nation-wide push for accountability at the university level. Accreditation organizations such as SACS are asking institutions to provide evidence of student learning. In turn, universities such as Georgia Southern are hiring consultants to teach faculty campus-wide how to define objectives for courses and programs and then how to relate the course content to the student learning outcomes expected. My observations and participation in these university activities illustrated how difficult it is for many faculty to consider learning outcomes first before deciding what information to deliver and how to deliver it. Taking a walk through any library and perusing the journal articles within disciplines (outside of education or perhaps composition journals) will highlight how few articles combine content area analysis with teaching methods. The types of publications also suggest that faculty are better prepared to discuss their fields of expertise with colleagues (other experts who are “fluent” in Gee’s secondary Discourse) than with helping undergraduates, especially first-year students, become practiced in the required literacy skills of the content areas.

According to Hillocks (1999), without reflection, at minimum, faculty who feel that they present information clearly and assume students will receive it and immediately understand are objectivist teachers who blame only the students for

any learning problems in the classroom: “if . . . students do not learn much even when proper teaching has taken place, it is not surprising because they are weak and cannot be expected to learn” (p. 133). This perception is more common than most faculty and administrators would like to admit.

An anecdote of a recent discussion from my own department illustrates this way of thinking. One professor expressed disappointment in her students, most of whom had not read the assignment for that day’s conversation. My colleague told us that she had such wonderful discussion questions ready but could not use them since the class did not bother to read. My immediate thought was to suggest she invite them to read by giving those well-prepared discussion questions as a guide *before* they met for class. Would she have given away answers or cheated her students in some way? For some reason, many faculty would answer yes rather than understand that guidance is the key to literacy development or learning in general. Showing students how we think and how we would like them to think in order to join our conversation needs to be part of our practice. Instead of correlating laziness in students by the responses we see, we need to help lead students in the direction of thinking and learning that we want them to be practicing.

In my study, this assumption of laziness seemed to apply only where reading assignments were given. Somehow suggesting reading strategies in a college classroom is equated with a lowering of standards, whereas with writing assignments many more faculty will provide guidance without thinking twice. As Gerald Graff (2003) asserts, being explicit in no way suggests that we are

lowering our standards as college educators: “simplification is a necessary feature of even the most complex kinds of work. Nothing inhibits clarification---and good teaching---more than professional fear and loathing of any formulation that seems reductive” (p. 10). In English 1101, reading a short story requires different meaning-making approaches than are necessary for reading an Economics text book, for example. Graff continues:

> Since beginning students need reductive simplifications before they can move on to the complication of a text, an issue, or a field, the pressure on academics to avoid being reductive, to eschew sound bites, to complicate as much as possible and at all times, clashes with the interests of good teaching. (p. 137)

My colleague who was disappointed with her students’ not reading the assigned material, as well as many other faculty in the university setting, equate guidance with “dumbing down” and miss out on some productive teaching moments. Most educators will agree that reading and writing cannot be separated when speaking about literacy, yet we continue to do just that every time we assign reading rather than teach students how to recognize the variety of genres and how to navigate through texts as they try to make meaning for themselves.

Part of the process of literacy learning has its place in English 1101, where most students are not comfortable with the multiple draft process, so during the semester they learn that effective writing takes time, is messy, and has no one easy solution. However, most students also associate writing with

only first-year English classes, and as a result they continue to have difficulties when given writing assignments in their upper level classes. After their freshman year, most undergraduates have had several semesters with little to no practice in writing, and just like any other skill (I use the metaphor of exercise), we forget or get rusty without regular exposure to the exercise. Across the campus many faculty often blame English 1101 instruction for students' weak skills, but when no consistent and effective use of writing guidance in the disciplines occurs, students cannot be expected to retain skills learned several years earlier and not practiced routinely. Moreover, when writing assignments are given in courses outside of English, a common part of the instructions for students is to use the writing center to get help with the paper, though often those working in the writing center have no experience with the literacy practices of specific content areas.

Suggestions for Teachers

More colleges need to offer faculty workshops that model how to be explicit with "the little things" like reading strategies, studying strategies, lecturing strategies. In addition, we need to be aware of the difference between academic literacy expectations among the content areas and the literacy perceptions of our students. Faculty and administrators need to help our students develop different habits of mind that will be reflected in their literacy strategies.

In a 1997 workshop presentation at the Coastal Georgia Writing Project in Savannah, Georgia, Sheridan Blau of the National Writing Project gave language arts teachers a quick demonstration about teaching reading. He gave out two poems, and participants chose one of them to read and follow these rules: read it

three times; each time note what they noticed; write any question that they had about the piece each time as well. Following this activity, the teachers discussed their findings with the person next to them and then with the whole group. Blau explained that the first reading encouraged the teachers to get the facts. By the second reading participants began to add new facts as well as some interpretation: what does it mean? And the by the third reading participants began to apply criticism: so what? What's its value? Through this activity, teachers practiced several levels from Bloom's Taxonomy from basic knowledge to synthesis as they read and read again. This explicit teaching strategy could be applied in an Economics or biology class as easily as it could in a literature or writing course. Spending one class period early in the term showing students how to think about the reading could save many of us the frustration later in the term when our students have given up trying to figure out what to look for or what it all means. If we want our students to develop habits of mind for critical thinking, for academic literacy practices that reflect academic excellence, we have to take the time to model the desired habits. If we don't, most of our students will continue to see re-reading of texts as something to be done in an English class---if at all---rather than a necessary academic and life literacy skill.

I am not suggesting that standards be lowered, but I am suggesting that as teachers, each of us needs to spend a few minutes over the first few weeks of a brand new school term explicitly discussing and modeling what the expectations are within each content area. That is what teaching is, not just telling information but showing how the information fits into the purpose of the

course, why it might be necessary to know, in what ways the information relates to the students' lives now and in the future. Most faculty in my study did implicitly discuss the information in the readings, but that method, especially early on in the term needs to be explicitly reviewed---the techniques for reading, the types of issues to look for or consider while reading the assignments. In other words, just as we do in writing courses, we need to help students build an academic infrastructure for the expected reading comprehension demands in this new collegiate environment (McKenna & Robinson, 1993; Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Tovani, 2004). Brief reminders for what to look for when reading a particular chapter for the next meeting's lecture, a quick review of how test questions are asked and how students should think about reading and responding to those questions, or a short explanation or demonstration of how course lectures are given (Outline form? Only information that illustrates what the book offers? How can students discern what the difference is?) are activities that we faculty should engage in and make a habit of illustrating every semester.

Sternglass (1997), Carroll (2002), and Sommers' (2004) long term case studies of college students' experiences and perceptions with writing most closely captures what university faculty need to know: learning and, therefore, literacy development take time, practice, guidance from mentors, and it never ends. Like the problems pointed out in many public schools, college courses tend to isolate information, and faculty often don't help students see the connections between subjects, concepts, and issues; this avoidance perpetuates students' difficulties with problem-solving skills. In addition to assessing course

expectations by surveying their own pedagogical intentions, faculty need to survey their students through multiple choice and/or written reflection to understand where students are at the beginning of their college experience rather than assuming or expecting them to catch up.

Moreover, we need to increase the number of longitudinal studies, similar to Sommers' four-year study at Harvard and Carroll's study at Pepperdine, to hear from our own students. What teaching, what educational values and outcomes, have our students demonstrated through practice or discourse throughout their college careers, not in just one course? Just as content in our courses change over the years, so do the types of student we teach. These studies will help faculty and administrators know their student population.

The teaching of writing is regarded as English 1101 & 1102 territory, never to be discussed or taught again in the upper level content areas; like reading, it's assigned without guidance for thinking and structuring ideas differently. If faculty expect their students to write well, they need to practice the strategies or patterns of presenting information unique to the particular field of study. However, faculty too often assume that students will automatically see the shift in expectations for each field of study. Similarly, reading strategies in the disciplines are rarely taught, unless instruction occurs in first-year writing courses where the genre approach to reading and writing are part of the program. Too often, faculty imply expectations by telling students to read, without making them aware of and then helping them adjust their literacy strategies. Reading textbook guide questions is not the same as hearing a teacher give guidance and explanation. How many of

us have picked up a text, a technical text, and followed it clearly? We need to remember that our students feel this frustration most of the time for several weeks or months in every new college course. Those of us in higher education talk about lifelong learning, but we spend too little time teaching or modeling for students how to sustain higher order literacy practices. To put this into a more colloquial expression, many faculty often talk the talk but don't walk the walk. This observation intends to suggest a lack of awareness rather than a deliberate "guarding of the Ivory Tower" of the discipline as Gerald Graff (2003) asserts. Most faculty want students to join the academic community, not shut them out of it.

One intentional course for addressing student learning issues is Freshman Orientation, but not all faculty teach or work with entry-level students. We teach content but not how to access it, the thinking that invites students into the academic community. The good news is that all the instructors I visited seemed passionate about their subject and concern for their students' learning. Many chose to supplement class time with WebCT or encouraged one-on-one conferences to help students understand and absorb basic as well as new information and concepts. Their multiple ways of presenting information suggests their awareness that all students don't learn in the same way or at the same pace. The question at hand is, how many other faculty make these type of efforts for the first-term students?

Suggestions for Further Research

Researchers in higher education need a concordance of sorts that compiles similar research from the fields of education, composition, psychology, and literacy in order to house a common lexicon to aid future research. In addition, composition researchers need to more consistently and explicitly discuss both reading and writing pedagogy in their findings. Literacy reports by influential organizations such as the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress, the International Reading Association, and the National Governors' Association also need to be more consistent and clear in synthesizing the teaching of writing studies with the research in the teaching of reading. Instead, the majority of the attention and funding is spent on reading, implying a separate and more significant area, rather than equal part of literacy development beyond elementary levels. As well, college student development studies need to become a permanent, natural part of inquiry wherever literacy research is taking place. If not, we perpetuate the practice of keeping separate rather than merging relevant and meaningful studies about student literacy.

For universities interested in first year experience programs, more teacher research is needed to study academic literacy practices--how much implicit teaching and how much explicit teaching, such as modeling, is happening in the classrooms. In order to promote the most effective student learning outcomes, which influences student retention, many college faculty and administrators must be more informed of the particular needs of first-year and first-term students.

Anthropologist Rebekah Nathan (2005) has studied college freshman at one northeastern university and offers one such starting place for looking beyond statistics to explain student literacy practices. Her ethnographic study included living as a freshman, in a dorm and taking classes, and revealed another viewpoint about when and why students choose to read course material.

From information revealed in this study's interviews and observations with the nine first-term students, it seems that additional attention needs to be paid to how class size and its correlation to consistent teacher/student interaction affect grades and retention at the university level. These questions are not what most administrators want to confront due to the economic repercussions, but if institutions are serious in their endeavors for student-centered learning, then the questions must be addressed.

Conclusion

Although research often relies on quantitative analysis in order to provide conclusive evidence, this dissertation explores five individual students' lives during their semester of university life through observation and discussions. Allowing individual students to voice their concerns and attitudes about academic expectations and performances enhances the volumes of quantitative studies already provided at local, state, and national levels. Their stories also help clarify what silent numbers might suggest. The students' responses help us understand the "why" of the data: Why Stephanie tried to include humor in her final exam cannot be gleaned from a number that tells how many students were successful in English 1101. Gil's explanation of his confusion between the Economics

teacher's vocabulary and the textbook's cannot be discerned by looking at the number of passing or failing grades in Economics 2105.

Paying attention to the students who choose to come to our universities will be of much more use than only following national trends or statistics concerning student literacy competence. Paying attention to and acting upon faculty's methods in addressing literacy practices within their discipline will meet the needs of the real students who are often too intimidated and overwhelmed to make the academic literacy transitions on their own. It is this researcher's hope that the information found within her study will justify Ann Berthoff's assertion: "How we use an idea, how it invites us to put into practice, will tell us best what the significance of the idea is."

References

Bartholomae, D. (1997). Inventing the university. In V. Villenueva, Jr. (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (pp. 589-619). Urbana, IL: NCTE. (Reprinted from *When a writer wan't write: Studies in writer's block and other composing process problems*, pp. 134-165, by M. Rose, Ed., 1985, New York: Guilford)

Bawarshi, A. (2003). *Genre and the invention of the writer.* Logan, UT: State University Press.

Baxter-Magolda, M. (1999). *Creating contexts for learning and self-authorship: Constructive-developmental pedagogy.* Nashville: Vanderbuilt University Press.

Berthoff, A. (1990). *The sense of learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Birnbaum, J. (1986). Reflective thoughts: The connection between reading and writing. In B. Petersen (Ed.), *Convergences: Transactions in reading and writing* (pp. 30-45). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Bissex, G., & Bullock, R. (Eds.). (1987). *Seeing for ourselves: Case study research by teachers of writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bizzell, P. (1992). *Academic discourse and critical consciousness.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Blau, S. (1997, October 24). *Disciplined literacy*. Workshop presented at the Coastal Georgia Writing Project fall conference, Savannah, GA.

Brandt, D. (1998, May). Sponsors of literacy. *College Composition and Communication,* 49, 165-185.

Britton, J. (1992). Theories of the disciplines and a learning theory. In E. Herrington & C. Moran (Eds.), *Writing, teaching, and learning in the disciplines* (pp. 47-60). New York: MLA.

Brooks, D. (2004). *On paradise drive: How we live now (and always have) in the future tense.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Carroll, L. A. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers.* Carbondale, IL: South Illinois Press.

Cashin, W. (1979, August). Motivating students. Idea paper No. 1, Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development.

Chiseri-Strater, E. (1991). *Academic literacies: The public and private discourse of university students.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Clifford, J., & Schilb, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Writing theory and critical theory.* New York: MLA.

Clinton, P. (2002, September/October). The crisis you don't know about. *Book.* No. 24, L4-L16.

Cushman, E. (Ed.). (2001). *Literacy: A critical sourcebook.* New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Daniell, B. (1994). Theory, theory talk, and composition. In J. Clifford & J. Schilb (Eds.), *Writing theory and critical theory* (pp. 127-140).

Denzin, N. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Eisner, E. (1994). *Cognition and curriculum reconsidered*. (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Elbow, P. (2004, October). Writing first. *Educational leadership,* 62, 8-13.

Emig, J. (1983). *The web of meaning.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Erlandson, D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Falk-Ross, F. (2001, December/2002, January). Toward the new literacy: Changes in college students' reading comprehensive strategies following reading/writing projects. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 45, 278-288.

Finn, P. (1999). *Literacy with an Attitude*. Albany: SUNY.

Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 40, 205-212.

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* London: Rutledge.

Gee, J.P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction and what is literacy? *Journal of Education*, 171, 5-25.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology.* New York: Basic Books.

Georgia Southern University. (2004-2005). *Fact Book 2004-2005*. Retrieved 5 May 2004 www.services.georgiasouthern.edu/osra/fb0405.pdf

Georgia Southern University. (2005). Press release. *News.*

Retrieved 13 September 2005 http://news.georgiasouthern.edu/2005_Press_Rels/Sept05/firstyrexp.htm

Gilyard, K. (1996). *Let's flip the script: African American discourse on language literature and learning.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Graff, G. (2003). *Clueless in academe: How schooling obscures the life of the mind.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Harris, J. (1994). The rhetoric of theory. In J. Clifford & J. Schilb (Eds.), *Writing theory and critical theory* (pp. 141-147). New York: MLA.

Haswell, R. (1991). *Gaining ground in college writing: Tales of development and interpretation.* Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press.

Henry, J. (1995). *If not now: Developmental readers in the college classroom.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Herrington, A., & Moran, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Writing, teaching, and learning in the disciplines.* New York: MLA.

Hillocks, G. (1999). *Ways of thinking, ways of teaching.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hobson, E. (2004, July). Getting students to read: Fourteen tips. Idea Paper No. 40, KS: Kansas State University, Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development.

Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (1993). *The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher-researchers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hymes, D. (1980). *Language in education: Ethnolinguistic essays.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human development.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kutz, E. (2005, March 16). *Studying discourse communities and classrooms.* Presentation at Research Network Forum at CCCC, San Francisco, 16 March 2005.

Kutz, E., Groden, S. Q., & Zamel, V. (1993). *The discovery of competence.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Kyllonen, P. (2005, September). The case for noncognitive assessments. *R & D Connections* (pp. 1-7). Retrieved January 8, 2006, from www.ets.org

Lemke, J. (1995). *Textual politics: Discourse and social dynamics.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Light, R. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lynch, C. & Wolcott, S. (2001, October). Helping your students develop critical thinking skills. Idea Paper No. 37, Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development.

Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

McKenna, M. & Robinson, R. (1993). *Teaching through text: Reading and writing in the content areas* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Mellix, B. (1996). From outside, in. In Garnes, S., Humphries, D., Mortimer, V., Phegley, J., & Wallace, K. (Eds.), *Writing lives* (pp. 75-85). New York: St. Martin's.

Memorial Hospital. (2005). *The stages of grief.* Retrieved September 13 2005, from http://www.memorialhospital.org/Library/general/stree-THE-3.html

Moffett, J. (1983). *Teaching the universe of discourse* (Rev. ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Nathan, R. (2005). *My freshman year: What a professor learned by becoming a student.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2005). *Georgia. Retrieved January 9, 2006, from* http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/

National Association of State Boards of Education. (2005). *Reading at risk: The state response to the crisis in adolescent literacy (Executive Summary)*. Retrieved October 22, 2005, from www.nasbe.org

National Commission on Writing.(2005). *Homepage*. Retrieved October 22, 2005, from www.writingcommission.org

National Governors' Association. (2005). Reading to achieve. *The Center for Best Practices.* Retrieved January 9, 2006, from www.nga.org

National Writing Project. (1995-2005). *Homepage.* www.writingproject.org

Newkirk, T. (1995). Foreword. In J. Henry, *If not now: Developmental readers in the college classroom.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Nist, S. L. & Kirby, K. (1989). The text marking patterns of college students. *Reading psychology: An international quarterly.* 10, 321-338.

Owen, D. (2001). Sustainable composition. In C. Weisser & S. Dobrin (Eds.), *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and pedagogical approaches.* Albany: SUNY.

Pellegrino, J., Chudowsky, N., & Glaser, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment..* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Perry, W. G. Jr. (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Petersen, B. (Ed.). (1986). *Convergences: Transactions in reading and writing.* Urbana: NCTE.

Piscitelli, S. (2004). *Study skills: Do I really need this stuff?* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Russell, D. (2002). *Writing in the academic disciplines.* 2nd ed. South Illinois Press.

Screven, M., & R. Paul. (2004). Defining critical thinking. *National council for excellence in critical thinking instruction.* Retrieved September 13, 2005, from http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/definingCT.shtml

Selfe, C. (1986). Reading as a writing strategy: Two case studies. In B. Petersen (Ed.), *Convergences: Transactions in reading and writing* (pp. 46-62). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Smith, F. (1994). *Writing and the writer.* 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Sommers, N. & Saltz, L. (2004, September). The novice as expert: Writing the freshman year. *College Composition and Communication*, 56, 124-148.

Stephens, E., & Brown, J. (2000). *A handbook of content literacy strategies: 75 practical reading and writing ideas.* Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Sternglass, M. (1997). *Time to know them: A longitudinal study of writing and learning at the college level.* Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Street, B. (2001). The new literacy studies. In E. Cushman (Ed.), *Literacy: A critical sourcebook.* (pp. 430-442). New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. (Reprinted from *Cross-cultural approaches to literacy*, pp. 1-21, 1993, London: Cambridge University Press)

Sunstein, B, & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2002). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.

Svinicki, M. (2005, February). Student goal orientation, motivation, and learning. Idea Paper No. 41, Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development.

Tankersley, K. (2003). *The threads of reading: Strategies for literacy development.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading?* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Vanderstoep, S. & Pintrich, P. (2003). *Learning to learn: The skill and will of college success.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weisser, C. & Dobrin, S. (Eds.). (2001). Ecocomposition: Theoretical and pedagogical approaches. Albany: SUNY.

Appendix A—Student Permission Forms
Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are a student in English 1101 at Georgia Southern University. I am a doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, but I am also a full-time faculty member at Georgia Southern University.

The purpose of this study is to observe and describe first-term college students as they make the transition to university-level academic expectations. Participation in this study will require your meeting with me four times during the fall semester, twice in a group setting (with five others) and twice in one-on-one taped interviews, for a total time commitment of approximately six hours. In addition, I will observe you in two classroom settings, your English 1101 and one other required core course, for a total of five times during the semester. After I interview you and do classroom observations, I will send you a copy of my summaries and descriptions. I will also ask for samples of class notes that you may take, tests, and/or essay samples. At each stage of my writing, you have the right to discuss with me any corrections you feel I need to make in my draft about the accuracy of my descriptions of your behaviors and comments. You are also welcomed to email me with additional comments that you feel necessary to make about our interview sessions or my observations of you in the classroom.

There are no known risks associated with this research. Actually, you may find this experience enjoyable and even helpful in becoming more aware of how you learn and adapt to college life. I will also be happy to be a consultant for you during the term on any papers you need help with in your classes. The information gained from this study may help me understand additional ways the Georgia Southern faculty can help make first-term students achieve academic success easier.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship to me or Georgia Southern. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will need to notify me so that I can eliminate all information pertaining specifically to you. If you decide to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your academic standing or services you receive from the University. The information obtained in the study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences for other teachers, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential unless you choose to present with me. Your teachers will not be told that you are the individual I am observing.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the Student Permission Form that accompanies this document.

Project Director:
Kathy Albertson
Asst. Professor
Dept. of Writing & Linguistics
P.O.Box 8026
Statesboro, Ga 30460
912-681-0884

Faculty Sponsor:
Dr. Nancy Hayward
Assoc. Professor
Dept. of English
Leonard Hall
Indiana, Pa 15701
724-357-2473

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Research Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (724-357-7730).

Student Permission Form

I, _____, do agree to participate in Kathy Albertson's study in the Fall 2004 semester at Georgia Southern University. I understand that my identity will be kept anonymous and that I may choose to drop out at any time for any reason.

As a participant, I agree to meet with Ms. Albertson four times during the term and answer as honestly as I know how about my activities as a student in the college classroom. I also agree to share some of my writing samples and class syllabi for additional data collection.

When Ms. Albertson drafts her observations, I will be given the opportunity to read her interpretations of her observations and transcriptions of our conversations. I have the right to make comments or corrections for Ms. Albertson to consider in her revisions of her work. In addition, if Ms. Albertson presents her findings at a professional conference or other gathering of a similar nature, I understand that I will have the opportunity to participate as well.

Finally, I understand that since I am participating in this case study, I have the right to ask Ms. Albertson for free help with my English 1101 assignments during this same fall semester.

If I do decide to drop out of the study, I agree to contact Ms. Albertson by email (katalb@georgiasouthern.edu) as soon as I have made the decision.

_____ _____

Signature Date

My local phone number is _____.

My email address is _____.

My landrum address is _____.

Appendix B—Faculty Form

August 9, 2004

Dear Colleague,

This fall, I will be conducting a case study involving six first-term college students. In order to do this research, I will need to observe them in two of their classes: English 1101 and one additional core course. I am hoping that you will allow me to use your _____ for this purpose.

I will not be judging your teaching methods. The purpose of my study (for my dissertation in the Composition/TESOL doctoral program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania) is to compare students' perceptions of their academic literacy competence with the university's expectations of such literacy. In this research, I will observe these students six times during the term and interview them four times. When I interview the students, I will be discussing what I observed of their classroom "habits" like note-taking or reading the text or "reading" the professor.

To this end, all I ask of you is a brief interview during the first week or two of the semester to find out the course expectations. In my dissertation, I am using the professors' course content as a representative of the university's academic literacy expectations, so hearing your explanation will help me situate your content area into the types of literacies that students will need to practice in order to succeed at the college level.

You will not be identified in the study, other than as the content area teacher of one or two of my students in my study. Also, I will not reveal the name of any student(s) who are in my study. However, I will gladly share with you my drafts of this research, and I will definitely send an electronic copy of my description of our interview about the course you teach.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the Faculty Permission Form that accompanies this document. Also, feel free to call me to discuss my project; I'd love to hear from you.

Project Director:
Kathy Albertson
Asst. Professor
Dept. of Writing & Linguistics
P.O.Box 8026
Statesboro, Ga 30460
912-681-0884

Faculty Sponsor:
Dr. Nancy Hayward
Assoc. Professor
Dept. of English
Leonard Hall
Indiana, Pa 15701
724-357-2473

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Research Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (724-357-7730).

Appendix C—Individual Interviews

Interview #1

Major?
Dropped which classes?
What do you have left now?
Any other classes considered dropping?

Style of notetaking:
- Where do you place your textbook and notebook?
- Do you use highlighter and/or pen? Why? When?
- Do you skip lines when you take notes?
- Do you use complete sentences when you take notes?

Reading ahead
- Do you read or skim assigned reading before you go to class?
- Do you mark the text (underline, highlight, make marginal comments)?
- Do you ever compare your class notes to the textbook's information?
- Have you found yourself predicting test questions when you look at the textbook or your notes?

Where do you sit in English? Why? Where do you sit in your other classes? Why?

Teacher's style:

What clues, if any, have you picked up about your teachers? How do you know what they think is important about the chapter or issue they are discussing?

Have you noticed any difference in the teacher's attitude or personality outside of class (if you've talked to them or emailed them at some point so far)?

What do you like about how your teachers teach the material?

What would you like them to do that perhaps they are not doing?

Classroom interaction:

Do you participate in class discussions? Why or why not?

Are you bringing required paper drafts, handouts, or other materials (like electronic clickers) to your classes regularly?

Did you know any other students in your classes before you arrived? After?

Study groups:
- Have you formed any study groups yet? If so, how often have you met?
- Have you been invited to any study groups yet?
- Would you like to be involved in a study group?
- Have you sought outside help with any classes (tutors, classmates)?

Homework:

Have you consistently done assigned homework? Has it helped with classroom content?

Have you done any practice work (not assigned, just available if you want to do it, perhaps on WebCT)?

Have you done any extra credit work yet?

Self-assessment:

What are you doing well as a student so far (studying, doing work before playing, reading assigned chapters, taking notes, getting extra help, asking for help in class or outside of class, contacting teachers---these are suggestions; feel free to add to the list since I don't know what you consider to be good student practices)?

What have you detected as weaknesses in your methods [this is mostly while you are in the classroom]? (These can be small or large things, like taking better notes or sitting in a better location).

Have you surprised yourself as a student here at GSU? In other words, are any of the things you've been doing well or feel you could be doing better surprising to you?

Are you the same type of student you were in high school? How can you tell?

Are you and your grades where you want them at this early point in the term?

Appendix D—Faculty Interviews

My teacher interviews will be strictly for getting explanations about course demands in order to represent the institution's academic literacy expectations of these first-term students. My interview questions will be

What are the department goals for this core course?

What information is required to be on your syllabus?

What teaching methods have you found most effective for achieving these goals? Why?

What are the major difficulties you have observed your students experiencing I this course?

How often, if at all, do students come by your office to ask questions?

How often, if at all, do students stay after class to ask questions?

How often, if at all, do students email you with class concerns or questions?

These questions will help me describe the various written, verbal, and performance (teaching styles) that help define the literacy expectations of Georgia Southern through the professor-as-university icon. I will need background information from the instructors in order to situate the context of syllabus, classroom discourse, and student reactions. According to Bawarshi, the syllabus "establishes the situated rules of conduct students and teacher will be expected to meet, including penalties for disobeying them . . . [it] also establishes a set of social relations and subjectivities that students and teacher have available to them in the course" (120). The "difficulties" question should invite the professor to talk about strengths and weaknesses in students' writing, reading, and test-taking abilities. The three questions about student contact tie in with the mid-term group interview questions I ask the students about their performance.

Appendix E---Stephanie's Writing

My poem Suicide

My poem "Suicide", is about a mothers attempt to kill herself. I took an incident from the book, "About a Boy", and made my poem. All of the words I used were in the book. I went through and pulled out part of the sentences to make my poem. I tried to emphasize things that seemed more extreme by using repetition. Sometimes I even put an exclamation mark.

Check out this cool way to combine these ideas

that affects many people every years.

Suicide is a very serious issue. ~~There are many people that are affected by it every year.~~ I was one of those people last year. Two people that I went to school with killed themselves. A lot of people criticized them for doing so. They didn't understand how they could do that to themselves. This is why I wrote this poem. In the poem, I tried to show the views of everyone that is involved; the person who is committing suicide and the ones that they know.

people tend to be so unsympathetic It's a shame.

↑ You need a colon here. The semicolon connects complete sentences.

Suicide is like an illness. That is one thing that people don't understand. A part of the brain takes control of all of the thinking and it is hard to stop it. One of my close friends was going to be the third to kill herself last year, I ended up stopping her. She had been through a hard time. She had seen her dad kill her mom and her mom's boyfriend. Her mom's family would have nothing to do with her after that, ~~The only reason was because~~ her dad was part of her. Her dad's parents took custody of her while her dad was put on death row. She didn't think there was anything worth living for. It took a long time to convince her otherwise.

Good way to join these ideas

but, fortunately,

only because

How terrible.

Poor girl. It's good she has loving friends like you

I felt like I was witnessing what I was writing as I wrote. Nick Hornby, the author of "About a Boy", did a very good job of making me feel this way in his writing. Since I was using his writing, it only made since that I still had that feeling. That's one reason why I chose to use that method. I never have been a good poem writer. Actually, I have

sense

Which method? Clarify.

Go into lots of detail about how you chose your snippets. Tell me why each one seems like a good choice.

My poem Suicide

never enjoyed writing poems at all. That changed this year when we used this method of poetry in a poem about the book "Bird by Bird". It makes writing poems easier.

I had to use the letter from the mother in the book for the mom's point of view. I used the incident description for everyone else. The book did a great job of describing the incident. As I wrote the poem, it made me think of my classmates who killed themselves, and my friend who attempted. One person hung herself from a tree in front of her ex-boyfriends house. He had just broken up with her. She felt like she was useless without him. He and his family ended up moving away and cutting down the tree. Grievance counselors were brought into the school. They helped people deal with the tragic loss of a classmate and friend. That was just some things that went through my head while writing. Naturally I was saddened by writing this poem. But I am glad that I did. I think that I chose a good topic and I also think that I showed everyone's point-of-views, or at least I hope I did.

ESSAY/LETTER

Content: B- (82)

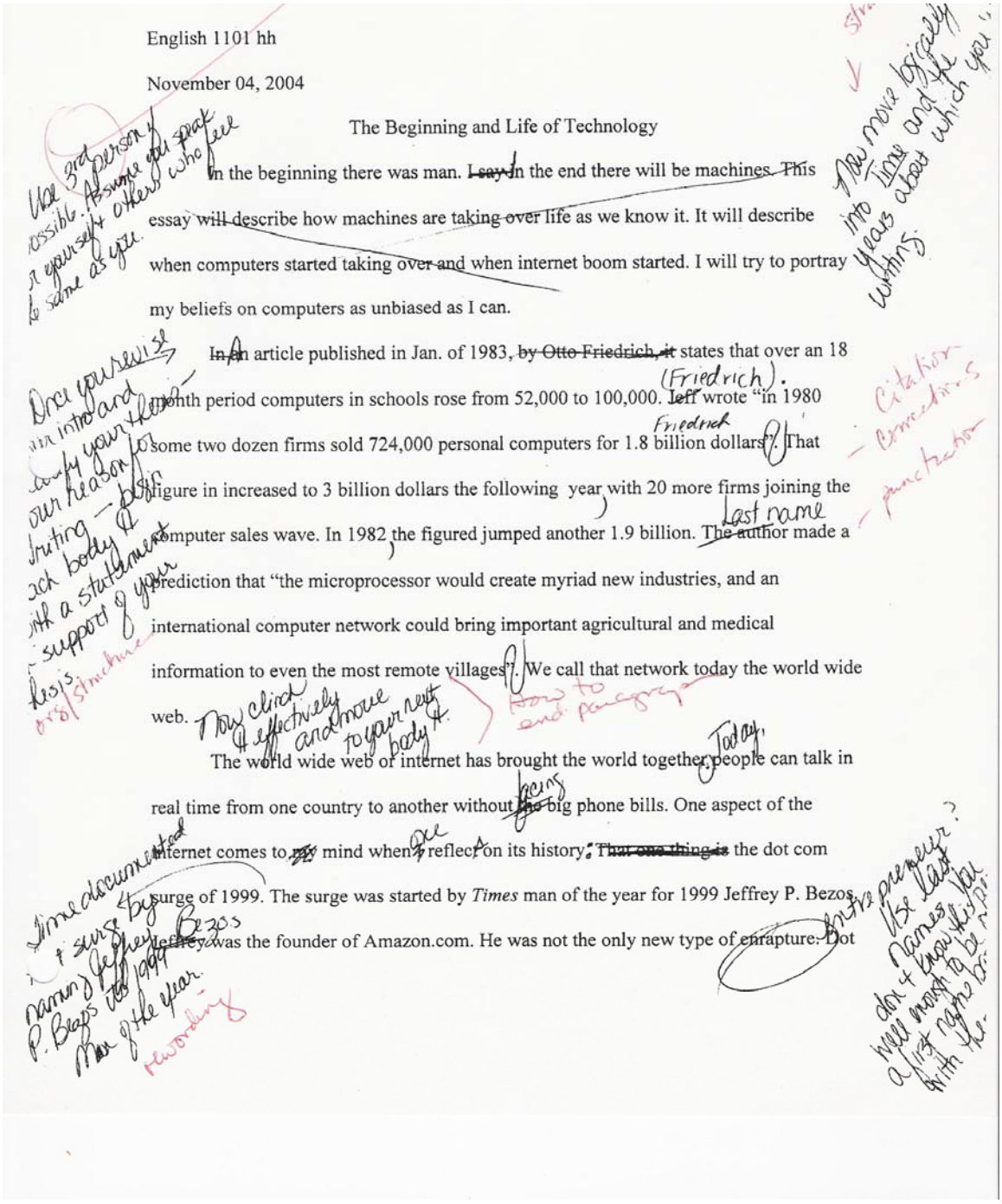
what you have is good;
You just need MORE!!

~~SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS ASAP~~

Grammar: 100 - 18 = 82

Total: 82
B-

Appendix F---Gil's Writing



English 1101 hh

November 04, 2004

The Beginning and Life of Technology

In the beginning there was man. ~~I say~~ In the end there will be machines. This essay ~~will describe~~ how machines are taking ~~over~~ life as we know it. It will describe when computers started taking over and when internet boom started. I will try to portray my beliefs on computers as unbiased as I can.

~~In~~ An article published in Jan. of 1983, ~~by Otto Friedrich, it~~ states that over an 18 month period computers in schools rose from 52,000 to 100,000. ~~Jeff~~ (Friedrich). wrote "in 1980 some two dozen firms sold 724,000 personal computers for 1.8 billion dollars". That figure in increased to 3 billion dollars the following year with 20 more firms joining the computer sales wave. In 1982 the figured jumped another 1.9 billion. The author made a prediction that "the microprocessor would create myriad new industries, and an international computer network could bring important agricultural and medical information to even the most remote villages". We call that network today the world wide web.

The world wide web or internet has brought the world together, people can talk in real time from one country to another without ~~the~~ big phone bills. One aspect of the internet comes to ~~my~~ mind when I reflect on its history. ~~That one thing is~~ the dot com surge of 1999. The surge was started by *Times* man of the year for 1999 Jeffrey P. Bezos. ~~Jeffrey~~ was the founder of Amazon.com. He was not the only new type of enrapture. Dot

coms started popping up ever where. There were ones for books, make up, and music. All making their founder filthy rich.

Now a days computers are a part of every day life. I personally use one at least three times a day for fun, work, and communication. Computers do everything. ~~you~~ we can program it to do ~~your~~ our home work, look up articles for research papers, and ~~I can~~ even get ~~it~~ them to think for ~~me~~ us. I personally think if I keep being so lazy that my computer will be come me and I will become my computer. I also believe that computers will be around long after I am gone and long after everyone else is gone to.

So? How does this fit into your overall purpose?

Cohesion

pronouns

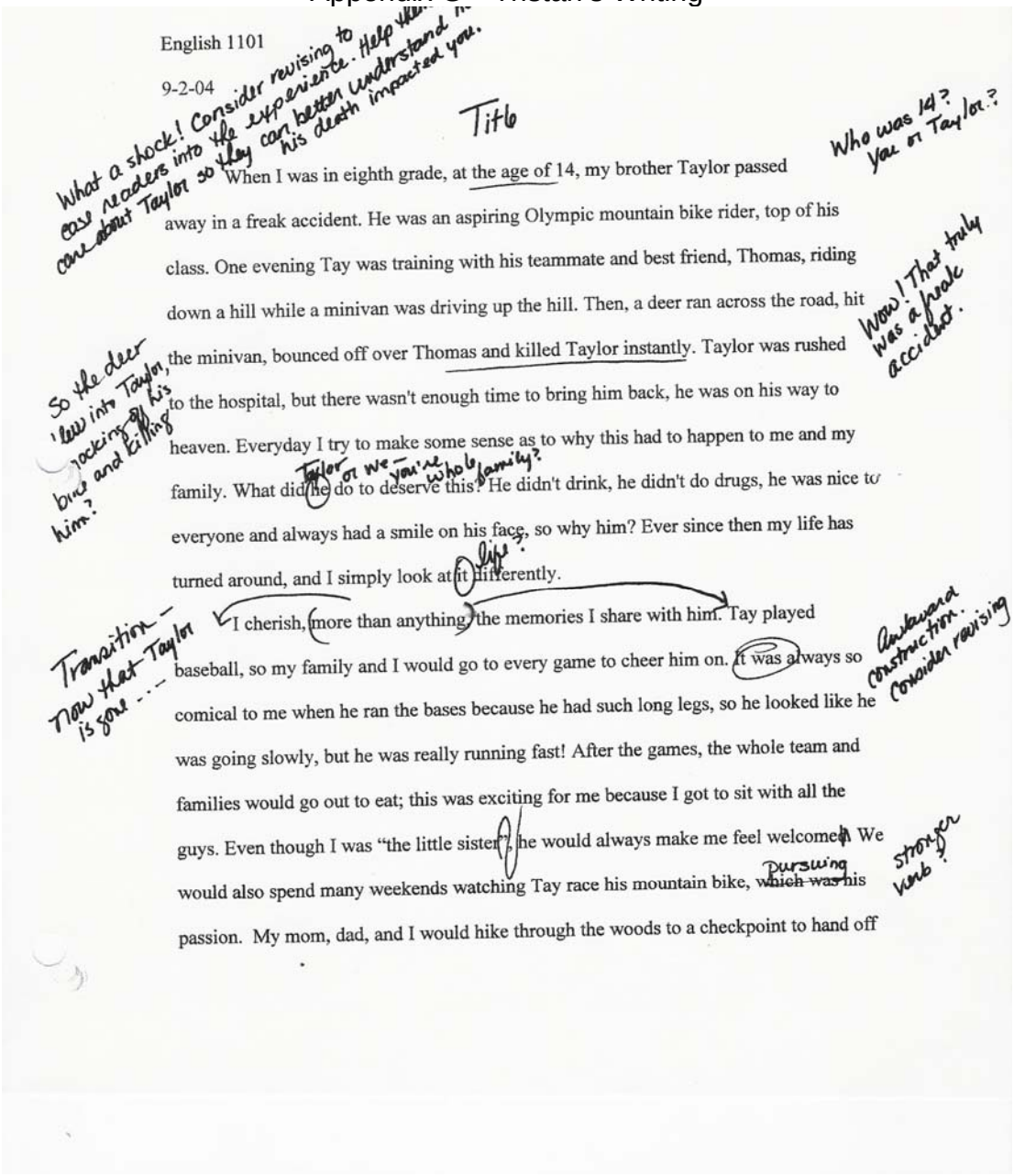
Cross-out

Once you've revised/strengthened your body #s, you'll also come to a stronger conclusion

Summary question for development

You have the seed of an idea, but you're going to have to do more cultivating if you want it to blossom. Besides the two articles you mentioned, how else does Time document that our lives are now dependent on machine? What about the fact that time is Online as well as in print? What about all of the ads for machines that are found within its pages?

Appendix G---Tristan's Writing



English 1101

9-2-04

What a shock! Consider revising to ease readers into the experience. Help them care about Taylor so they can better understand his death impacted you.

Title

When I was in eighth grade, at the age of 14, my brother Taylor passed away in a freak accident. He was an aspiring Olympic mountain bike rider, top of his class. One evening Tay was training with his teammate and best friend, Thomas, riding down a hill while a minivan was driving up the hill. Then, a deer ran across the road, hit the minivan, bounced off over Thomas and killed Taylor instantly. Taylor was rushed to the hospital, but there wasn't enough time to bring him back, he was on his way to heaven. Everyday I try to make some sense as to why this had to happen to me and my family. What did he do to deserve this? He didn't drink, he didn't do drugs, he was nice to everyone and always had a smile on his face, so why him? Ever since then my life has turned around, and I simply look at it differently.

Who was 14? You or Taylor?

Wow! That truly was a freak accident.

So the deer 'flew into Taylor, knocking off his bike and killing him?

Taylor or we — you're whole family?

life?

Transition — Now that Taylor is gone ...

I cherish, more than anything, the memories I share with him. Tay played baseball, so my family and I would go to every game to cheer him on. It was always so comical to me when he ran the bases because he had such long legs, so he looked like he was going slowly, but he was really running fast! After the games, the whole team and families would go out to eat; this was exciting for me because I got to sit with all the guys. Even though I was "the little sister", he would always make me feel welcomed. We would also spend many weekends watching Tay race his mountain bike, ~~which was~~ pursuing his passion. My mom, dad, and I would hike through the woods to a checkpoint to hand off

Awkward construction. Consider revising

stronger verb?

a new water bottle as he rode by. It always amazed me how he rode for hours at a time, going up and down hills on rough terrain! I will always look up to his dedication to the sport; he was a lean, mean, riding machine! Anytime I see a biker riding down the road now, Taylor always comes to mind, and I know he's thinking about me too! When Tay had his license for about a year, he would drive me to and from school. Those were probably my favorite times ~~spending~~ spent with him, just us two alone. We would blast the music and sing at the top of our lungs! We always had something to talk about, but if not, we still enjoyed each others' presence. One time I needed a ride to a friends' house, and Tay calculated the miles, so he would know how much to charge me for gas! It ended up costing me around a dollar, but he let me slide being the nice guy he was. These old memories of mine are just some of the times when I would do anything to him have back, Just to see the huge smile on his face if he won a race or to take me on a car ride. So many people take their lives and others for granted. These are the things that I have come to realize in my life that matter the most to me. Having family makes my life fulfilled. They are the people who will always love me and always be there for me no matter what.

As the years go on, everyday I have a new take on life. I have learned to appreciate everything I do, and everywhere I am fortunate to go. Taylor didn't get to experience all that life had to offer, but since I'm here I am able to explore it. This accident has changed my life forever, but I will never forget the memories and times we spent together!

After seeing how someone's life can be taken from them so fast, I look at my life and people around, and it's not worth being mean to anyone. Taylor died doing something he loved which is one of the ways that makes it

Do review comma rules before turning in your final draft.

Review rules for forming + using possessives, too

Move from his riding to your good times with him...now effectively also suggest making your close times w/him a separate ¶.

more specifically

Consider combining these last two ¶s for a more effective conclusion

easier for me to cope with. Although I'm really young, I've been through challenges other people haven't, which has allowed me to understand more about myself and my life. I don't think ~~anyone~~ people can completely understand themselves. Life has many challenges and obstacles; it is how ~~you~~ we handle them that make ~~you~~ us who ~~you~~ we are.

I really like what you have so far, especially your two body paragraphs. The first does a good job of bringing Taylor alive for readers; the second effectively captures your close relationship to him. Your intro & conclusion could use some work though. One possibility would be to begin with your 1st two Ps and then move to the accident. Then develop how you felt at the time in one P and what you've come to realize in your conclusion. Regardless, I'll look forward to reading your revision.

Appendix H—Renee's Writing

Essay 1/ September 8, 2004
English 1101/
Revision 1

Special Gift

I can remember getting my new Lamborghini remote control car just like it was yesterday. It was long, black, shiny, super-fast, and it had Lamborghini written down the side of it in glistening silver letters. I loved that car to death. When I first got it, I took car of it as if it was a real car. I was determined to own one when I got older. ~~I thought I was the only person in the world with this car.~~

It was the Christmas of 1996. Like most ten year olds, I was anxious to see what this Christmas had to offer. I woke up and ran straight to the Christmas tree. Then, I realized I didn't wake my brother and sister. So, I went and got them out of bed, and the three of us headed toward our presents. Our parents were already awake. I and my siblings tore into our gifts eagerly. When I unwrapped my brand new car, it seemed like everything stopped. I was speechless and my mouth dropped. I couldn't believe my parents had actually brought that for me. I can remember telling them I wanted a remote control car, but never did it cross my mind that it would be a Lamborghini. They really surprised me. I ran and gave both of them a big hug and a kiss. All the other new toys, clothes, and gifts I received that Christmas did not matter at the time. It was all about my spanking brand new, shiny, black, and sleek Lamborghini remote control car. My brother received a remote control car, also, but he was so jealous of mine. He thought my parents had put the wrong name on our presents. ~~His was~~ green and black and very plain.

Therefore, all we did was race against each other. That was our favorite thing to do in our free time. We were very competitive. He was determined to prove that his car was faster than mine. Constantly, I proved him wrong. We had bets going on all the time. If I beat him, he had to do my chores and vice versa. We raced our cars inside the house, outside in the yard, in the shed, and down the dirt roads. Racing inside the houses sometimes got us in trouble, though. It didn't matter to us. All of our races were full of energy and trash talking. Beating him always made my day and gave me bragging rights. Since he was two years older than me, I didn't get a chance to beat him in to many things.

However, my winning quickly came to an abrupt end one day, only after I had my car for about three weeks. It had been raining all day off and on the previous day. The next morning my brother and I went outside to race our cars, neglecting the fact that it was very wet and muddy outside. I will never forget this particular race. I was in lead, and just knew I had this race won. Well, little did I know there was a big mud puddle that was waiting for me. Still, oblivious to the fact that I was about to run into the puddle, I continued racing. I could taste the victory. Then, all of a sudden my baby, my dream car, my best Christmas present ever had disappeared. When I realized I drove my brand new Lamborghini remote control in that mud I was devastated and horrified. Tears came to my eyes but I didn't let them fall. My brother was already picking at me because technically he won and my car was broken. I didn't want him to call me a cry baby and add to his laughter so I held back my tears. I ran in the house to tell my mother the whole story. I thought she would be upset with me but she wasn't. She assured me that it would quickly get fixed. For the remainder of the day I was upset and didn't want anyone to bother me.

Unfortunately, I never got my car fixed. My parents was suppose to buy me a new battery, but never did. I nagged them and nagged them, but it seemed like the more I did the longer it took them. After a while I got feed up. I told myself that I was going to save my own money and fix my own car. I went to a nearby Radio Shack and priced a new battery. It cost thirty-five dollars. I started saving the money out of my allowance every week, but about two weeks into saving my money I say a new doll that I just had to have. After I got my new doll, I just forgot about getting the money to get my new battery. My attention had moved on the something new. To this day my car sits at the bottom of my book self back at home collecting dust. It gets played with about once a year during my father family reunion. One of my younger cousins, named Justin, which is fascinated with all types of cars, wheels it around me kitchen floor having the time of his life.

That Lamborghini car meant the world to me ~~at that time~~ and it was a very special gift. I was obsessed with that car. I couldn't believe my parents kept their word and brought it for me. It was the best Christmas present I had ever received. Every time I beat my brother in a race it made me feel powerful and in charge. Even though it will never work again, I will always keep it. ~~Having that car and tearing it up shortly after I received it taught me a valuable lesson. It taught me that material things don't last forever so do not worship them. It also taught me to never use a remote control car outside after it has rained.~~ That car was the best Christmas present I had ever received.

not a moral to the story, but a reflection

talk about how I felt then

for 3 fantastic weeks

It only took a trip to the mall to redirect my attention (more girly)