UNDERGRADUATES WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS:  
TWENTY-FOUR CASE STUDIES  
Volume I  

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate  
School of the Ohio State University

By  

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* * * * *  

The Ohio State University  
1992

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To My Family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Given that my dissertation examines the many influences on students’ research-based writing, it is only fitting that I thank those who have influenced me in writing the dissertation itself. I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Frank O’Hare (Chair), Edward P.J. Corbett, and Andrea Lunsford, for their expert advice and their willingness to read multiple drafts of such a lengthy document; my parents, for their untiring support throughout my graduate career and throughout my life; my wife, Jan, for her encouragement throughout and her invaluable assistance in the last hectic days of preparing this document; and my daughters, Molly and Chelsea, for their kind patience in accepting my long absences from home during those same days.

Most of all, I would like to thank the students, teachers, and librarians who participated in this study for sharing of themselves and thus making this study possible.
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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM

Background

For better or worse, the research paper occupies a central position in English composition programs nationwide. In the December 1982 issue of College English, James E. Ford and Dennis R. Perry state that of 397 university, college, and community-college English departments surveyed, 84 percent offered research-paper instruction during First-Year Composition and 66 percent required First-Year Composition students to write a research paper (827). According to the same survey, when research-paper instruction was offered in First-Year Composition, that instruction constituted about 35 percent of the course (828). And as of 1982, according to Ford and Perry, research-paper assignments in First-Year Composition were becoming more widespread, not less so, than they had been a few years before. Moreover, no publications have suggested that the research paper’s role in composition programs has diminished during the intervening decade.

Nor are a college undergraduate’s experiences with research-paper assignments likely to end with First-Year Composition. The most frequently encountered writing
assignments across the college curriculum are those requiring students to incorporate information and ideas from other texts into their own writing (Nelson and Hayes 1).

Yet despite the prominent role research-paper assignments play in composition programs and across the curriculum, our professional discourse has largely ignored the research paper. Ford and Perry note that from 1923 to 1982, an average of less than one article on research-paper instruction per two years appeared in College English and College Composition and Communication combined (826)—an average which has not changed appreciably since 1982. In their prefatory comments to a 1981 bibliography of articles on research-paper instruction, James E. Ford, Sharla Rees, and David L. Ward note a complete lack of studies treating the research paper as a work "developed after a process of defining and solving investigative problems and composed through processes current researchers like Janet Emig and Linda Flower are helping us to understand" (51). A decade later, matters have improved only slightly: in a 1991 article in Written Communication, Sandra Stotsky states that "only a few studies seem to touch on what students do as they select and narrow a topic, locate sources, sift through these sources, and develop, however tentatively, a central research question or thesis statement" ("On Developing" 196). Similarly, in a 1990 article from College Composition and Communication, Stotsky writes, in a virtual tongue-twister,
"Remarkably, research on the process of research for writing a research paper is just beginning in the field of composition research" ("On Planning" 51). Moreover, although Stotsky does not say so, research on the process of writing a research paper is also just beginning. As Matthew Wilson puts it in an October 1992 essay in College English, research into research-paper writing remains a "relative backwater of composition theory" (663).

Perhaps researchers have hesitated to show interest in the research paper because such an interest may seem "politically incorrect." After all, Richard Young lists a "preoccupation with the research paper" as one characteristic of the "current-traditional paradigm" (31), while James Berlin states that the research-paper assignment originally became widespread because it fit with the "insistence in current-traditional rhetoric on finding meaning outside the composing act, with writing itself serving as a simple transcription process" (70). But given the prominence of the research paper in composition programs nationwide, our knowledge of the ways students complete research-paper assignments should not be allowed to remain so primitive.

This lack of knowledge manifests itself in profound gaps between teachers' approaches to research-paper instruction and students' views of the research-paper assignment. Teachers often "simply assume that college students know how to use a library and act accordingly," whereas in fact "an epidemic of
library illiteracy" makes the campus library a forbidding place for many students (Kuhlthau 1). Teachers and textbooks tend to emphasize the educational value of the research and writing processes, often treating a good grade on the finished paper as an incidental byproduct (Haskell 179-80; Dinitz 9), while students often concern themselves almost exclusively with the grade, with little or no thought of learning anything in the process (Haskell 6, 78; Becker, Geer, and Hughes 33-36; Connell 26-28). Teachers implicitly evaluate student research papers according to the criteria for academic journals, publications seeking highly original analytic essays designed to further the pursuit of knowledge in their disciplines, whereas students generally view the research paper as an informative essay which reports other people's knowledge and demonstrates the student's information-gathering and citation skills (Schwegler and Shamoon 817-21).

The gap between teachers' attitudes and students' views creates a bitterly comic irony: when interviewed, students routinely acknowledge adapting their choice of topic, writing style, and thematic approach to please a teacher (Kantor 90; Haskell 157; Kuhlthau 152, 210, 389), yet they are largely unaware of the criteria by which their teachers will evaluate their papers. Nor are students likely to press their teachers for more information. Research indicates that students needing help with research papers are far more likely to seek that help from their peers than from a teacher or a librarian
(Haskell 181; Kuhlthau 167-173). Students may be afraid to ask in class how their papers will be evaluated, fearing a negative response from a teacher (Haskell 181). Similarly, they will falsely nod "yes" when a librarian asks "Does everyone understand?" or will even avoid the library altogether to avoid having their research inadequacies exposed (Collins, Mellon, and Young 74-79). One study suggests that they sometimes regard required individual conferences as a threat, a hidden examination of how much they have accomplished thus far (Kuhlthau 206). If we wish to close the gap between students' and teachers' perspectives on the research paper, we cannot wait for students to take the initiative.

Given the problems with student-teacher communication about the research paper, it is no surprise that many teachers advocate abandoning the research-paper assignment, at least as it is now taught. But even this position is undermined by its supporters' ignorance of student realities. Ken Macrorie, probably the most energetic critic of the traditional research paper, describes most students as first entering the library the weekend before a research paper is due, throwing together a few quotations, and turning in a product they regard as meaningless for an assignment they consider absurd (161, 164). However, in the two most thorough studies of students doing library work for research papers, most students began library research many weeks before the finished product was due
(Haskell 125-32, Kuhlthau 112), and the overwhelming majority looked in more than one library (Haskell 105). Even when surveyed in that glum time just after being assigned a research paper, most students stated that research-paper assignments increase the amount they learn in a course and that they usually grow more interested in their subject during research (Kuhlthau 248). Many of these same students expressed self-satisfaction on completing a research paper (Kuhlthau 248) and pride in previous research papers (Kuhlthau 146). Furthermore, when former students are asked what work in English classes has been most valuable to them, "the research paper is invariably at the top of the list" (Kraus 1)--a result especially impressive because former students who are asked what subjects have been most valuable in their careers generally place English communication at or near the top of the list (Corbett, "Status of Writing" 50). Apparently the gap in teacher-student communication has prevented us from intelligently assessing either the flaws or the virtues of research-paper assignments.

Detailed case studies can help bridge this gap. Through interviews, students and teachers alike may present their own perspectives in their own words. Moreover, teachers and researchers alike have observed that qualitative research, when it features full portraits of individual students learning in natural contexts, often exceeds quantitative research in providing findings that teachers can accept,
understand, and apply to their own classrooms (North 205; Kantor, Kirby, and Goetz 294).

In a 1988 article, Edward P.J. Corbett recommends that composition teachers periodically stop to ask themselves, "Am I doing my students any good?" ("Teaching Composition" 452). It is time we used qualitative research's "power of the scientific imagination to bring us in touch with strangers" (Geertz 16) to determine whether or not we do those strangers who become our students any good when we require that they write research papers.

The Research Problem

This study investigates the task representation, research, writing, and revising processes of 24 college undergraduates as they completed research-based essays. The sample ranges from basic writers at an open-door community college to honors students completing senior theses at a somewhat selective university and includes students at three levels of composition (Basic Writing, First-Year Composition, Advanced Composition), as well as students in sociology, history, and chemistry classes.

Research Questions

As its central research question, this study asks:

—What do students do, physically, mentally, and emotionally, from the time they receive the research-paper assignment until they hand in the finished paper, and why?

Of course, this general question subsumes many other, more narrowly focused, questions: To what extent are college
undergraduates' actions influenced by their upbringing? By their previous education and previous writing experiences? By the teacher who gives the assignment? How does the academic institution as a whole influence the individual undergraduate's situation and actions? How much effort does a research project require of college undergraduates, and how much effort are they willing to expend? How do they define the task? What guides their behavior as they choose a topic, seek sources, narrow their focus, take notes, write drafts, and revise? Do long, elaborate research papers require skills fundamentally different from those required to write shorter, structurally simpler research papers, as is theorized by Ford, Rees, and Ward (51-52)? Do more advanced or more successful students approach the process in ways fundamentally different from those of less advanced or less successful students? How do students' motivation and self-discipline affect the process? What library research skills do students possess? Do students use note cards and outlines if they are not required to do so? If students have difficulty with unintentional plagiarism, at what stage and under what circumstances do they do so?

Given the central question, most of this study will attempt to portray what happens and to account for why it happens. But we cannot analyze why things happen as they do without speculating, even if only implicitly, about how things could have turned out better. Thus, although this study
cannot hope to provide definitive answers, another major research question investigated is:

--Under what circumstances, if at all, should college teachers require their students to write research papers?

This question, too, subsumes many other, more narrowly focused, questions: Should First-Year Composition include research-paper assignments and instruction? If college teachers do assign research papers, how may they best help their students to complete those assignments? How much guidance, if any, should teachers provide students in selecting a topic and an approach to that topic? How, if at all, may they beneficially intervene in students’ researching and writing processes? What effect, if any, does the advice in composition textbooks have on students’ researching and writing processes? What effect, if any, does research-paper instruction provided by the teacher in the classroom have? Do the "generic research paper" assignments students often encounter in composition classes adequately prepare them for the writing tasks they encounter in other disciplines? Do library orientation sessions help college students? If students do use note cards and/or outlines, do these devices help them? Are students aware of and do they understand the criteria by which their papers will be evaluated? Do teachers think their students are aware of and understand those criteria? If there is a significant communication gap between students and teachers regarding the research paper, how can
that gap be bridged?

Research Influences and Perspectives

The writings of various researchers and theorists have provided many conceptual frameworks for interpreting the data in this study. Although most of these writings are discussed in Chapter Two, certain theorists especially important to this study deserve mention in this introductory chapter.

Perhaps the most important of these is the Soviet philosopher, literary critic, and language theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin is perhaps best known for his concept of heteroglossia, a term which literally means "mixed tongues" or "mixed language." That is, Bakhtin describes all written and spoken texts as hybrids derived from various sources. Thus the language encountered in, say, Thackeray's Vanity Fair contains the voices of all the characters—Becky, Amelia, Rawdon, Dobbin, and so forth—as well as the narrative voice, a voice which at any point in the novel may be colored by the influence of any character, as when the narrator temporarily seems to adopt the speech style and viewpoint of a particular character. Yet William Thackeray selects from among these voices, for in Bakhtin's words, "... that author's intentions must dominate and must constitute a compact, unequivocal whole" (quoted in Titunik 198). But even if the author's intentions unify a text, to Bakhtin that text is incomplete in itself, for "The text lives only by coming into contact with another text ... joining a given text to a
dialogue" (Dialogic 162). And as in published texts, so in everyday life: when any individual speaks or writes, that person selects now one "voice" and now another within himself or herself, reflecting the influence of parents, education, occupation, friends, and so forth. Thus, "the word in language is half someone else's" until the writer or speaker "populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (Discourse 293). Bakhtin further states that when we speak or write, we are influenced not only by other voices that we already have encountered, but also by voices that we anticipate we will encounter, in dialogue:

... from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake, in essence, it is actually created... The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response. (Dialogic 94)

In fact, Bakhtin asserts that not only language, but thought itself, is dialogic and heteroglossic. To Bakhtin, our thoughts come into being through encounters with the thoughts of others.

Bakhtin's ideas are important to this study. When students are assigned a research paper, their thoughts have already been shaped by contact with the thoughts of parents, friends, the teacher giving the assignment, and thousands of others. These other "voices" will influence the paper's language not only directly, as when a student recalls that her teacher does not want her to use "I" in a paper, but also
indirectly, as when a student is aware that her friends consider it "uncool" to put much effort into schoolwork. As students seek a controlling idea for their own texts while reading the texts of others in the library, their thoughts are born and shaped by struggle with the thoughts they encounter in their sources. When students write research papers, they must combine the words of various "characters"--the cited sources--with the words of a central narrator whose voice may at times be influenced by the voices of the other characters, as when a source's ideas are paraphrased. Yet the student must adapt these words to fit his or her own intentions. Also, while constructing this utterance, the student has taken into account possible responsive reactions--from friends, from "peer editors" in the class, and most of all from the teacher. Finally, if the student's intentions have not created a compact, unequivocal whole--if the sources seem to have taken over the discourse, rather than seeming to be adapted to the student's expressive intentions--then the teacher's responsive reaction is liable to be negative. Thus, Bakhtin's insights should provide us with a useful lens through which to view the almost infinite factors influencing the production of a text--in this case, a research paper.

Bakhtin's ideas also may help us negotiate among the competing voices now heard in composition studies regarding the nature of the "self" behind any piece of writing, a concept studies such as this one must address. Some
composition specialists, often quoting expressivist authorities such as Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, or Donald Murray, portray the writer as a unique individual seeking to further his or her individuality through self-expression; others, using the ideas of social constructivists such as Patricia Bizzell and Kenneth Bruffee, view language as essentially a social construct and portray the writer as an individual seeking connection with others through acceptance into a discourse community, so that the individual voice is constructed by and blends with a communal chorus; and still others, taking a post-structural position such as that of Michel Foucault, portray individuality as a bankrupt concept, a myth created by Western liberalism and humanism, and the writer as nothing more than a social construct of the academy. While a Bakhtinian perspective perhaps resembles the "individual voice blending with communal chorus" view more than it resembles the others, it nevertheless allows for Macrorie-like individualism—"the author's intentions must dominate"—and for Foucault-like social construction, as others shape our very thoughts and as our utterance is created for the reactions of others. Thus, a Bakhtinian perspective need not blind us to other perspectives.

Other conceptual frameworks for this study come from researchers involved more specifically with students' research-based writing. Richard Larson, for example, argues that "the so-called 'research paper,' as a generic, cross-
disciplinary term, has no conceptual or substantive identity" (813). That is, the "research paper" is not the only assignment requiring students to conduct independent investigation, and research methods as well as research-writing formats vary from discipline to discipline. Thus, Larson argues, first-year composition's "generic research paper" should be abolished. To Larson, to teach the generic research paper "is quite often to pander to the wishes of faculty in other disciplines that we spare them a responsibility that they must accept" (816). Since this study examines not only students completing "generic" research papers for composition classes but also students completing discipline-specific theses in chemistry and history, it should serve as a forum for evaluating Larson's views.

Other conceptual frameworks derive from studies of how teachers and students define research-writing tasks. As mentioned already, Schwegler and Shamoon report a wide gap between how most college students define research papers and how most college teachers do. According to Schwegler and Shamoon, college students generally define research papers as information-gathering exercises written for an audience of teacher-as-examiner and designed to demonstrate the student's ability to report and document other people's thoughts. College teachers across the curriculum, on the other hand, generally define research writings as original, analytical explorations, written as part of the ongoing dialogue of a
community of scholars—and the teachers evaluate both the form and the content of student writing according to criteria established in their professional discourse (818-21). This study examines not only how students in the sample define their research-paper assignments, but also how their teachers influence those definitions.

Linda Flower, John Hayes and others have taken task representation a step further, examining how students’ task representation affects their plans and the papers themselves. In a 1980 article, Flower and Hayes state that "good writers are simply solving a different problem than poor writers" (30). That is, good writers, far more than poor writers, set ambitious goals for themselves by "creat[ing] a unique, fully-developed representation of the unique rhetorical problem" implicit in any writing assignment (25). They also claim that the very process of setting ambitious goals can help writers to solve those goals, because "setting up goals to affect a reader is not only a reasonable act, but a powerful strategy for generating new ideas and exploring . . . a topic." Thus, task representation is itself "part of what makes a writer 'creative'" (30). Since the publication of this seminal article, Flower, Hayes, and their colleagues at Carnegie-Mellon have extended these concepts from the effect of rhetorical goal-setting on writing to its effect on reading (Haas and Flower) and on "reading-to-write," that is, on reading sources and later incorporating ideas from those
sources into one's own essay, as in a research paper (Spivey and King; Kantz, Composing; Kantz, "Helping"; Nelson and Hayes). In all of these activities, the Carnegie-Mellon group argues, good students show a richer awareness of rhetorical situations—the rhetorical situations shaping their sources' writing as well as the rhetorical situation implicit in the writing assignment—and this richer awareness works as a heuristic, helping the students to generate new material. This study will examine students' task representation, the levels of rhetorical awareness the students display in their reading and writing, and the effects of these matters on the students' finished products.

Sandra Stotsky has examined essentially the same issues as the Carnegie-Mellon group, but with a somewhat narrower focus, in articles exploring the complex interrelationships among planning, reading, writing, thinking, and developing a central idea for a research-based essay. Stotsky contends that current models of the writing process err by interpreting a writer's pre-first-draft writings solely as products of previous thought, ignoring their role as influences on subsequent thought ("On Planning" 47). Such writings, Stotsky argues, play a crucial role in the writer's struggle to find a focus for the essay:

Categorizing, organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing may be the most significant generative activities in the search process, utterly dependent on a dynamic interaction between thinking and writing. The act of "discovery" may well take place—or at least take place initially—during the
search process rather than during the composing process for most academic research and writing. . . ("On Developing" 207)

Citing evidence from a dissertation by Carol Kuhlthau, Stotsky suggests that for research-based writing, the search process is largely separate from the writing process and that current models for the composing process are inadequate for the research paper because those models subsume research under composing ("On Planning" 51-52; "On Developing" 208). Stotsky's view also suggests that for research papers, Donald Murray's well-known portrayal of the first draft as the "discovery draft" does not generally apply, since to Stotsky discovery takes place, at least initially, during research. For research papers, Stotsky argues, the writing likeliest to provoke discovery occurs prior to the first draft. But Stotsky concedes that her views as yet lack sufficient supporting evidence: "To date, no one has reported data on the influence of the writing done during the process of planning on the planning process itself. . ." ("On Planning" 48). Through examination of students' pre-first-draft writings and drafts and through interviews with students throughout their researching and writing processes, this study provides data with which to test Stotsky's theories.

The final concept underlying this study is, paradoxically, that data are sometimes worth presenting even without being correlated to a larger concept. Lucy McCormick Calkins criticizes qualitative studies of writing in which the
researchers "use their data as a pool from which to draw theories and supportive anecdotes, never dealing with the data bank as a whole" (138). And in *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*, Judith Goetz and Margaret LeCompte assert:

> Results that are sufficiently comprehensive are applicable to a variety of social-science conceptual and theoretical frameworks. . . . Although investigators may be held responsible only for integrating their conclusions with the particular conceptual frameworks that informed their efforts, alternative applications for complex and profound results should be evident to readers. This, in turn, contributes to the significance of the study. (243)

In other words, if a qualitative researcher presents data and methods fully and clearly, then the study's value may reside not only in the conclusions drawn by the original researcher, but also in conclusions drawn from the data by other readers, readers familiar with conceptual frameworks inaccessible to the original researcher. This chapter has just provided an example of such interpretation: Kuhlthau's qualitative study was conducted primarily to help librarians, but Stotsky applied data from that study to her theories about models of the writing process.

According to Goetz and LeCompte, when novice researchers analyze their data, they often limit their perspectives to their own academic specialties and to the most recent, currently-fashionable concepts within those specialties (236). With such limited perspectives, researchers risk missing much of the potential significance in their own data. Thus, one
can argue that a study based on qualitative research should include any data that seem potentially significant, even if the significance is not immediately apparent to the author. While this approach undoubtedly makes for bulky texts—Kuhlthau's dissertation, so important to Stotsky's theories, is about 400 pages long—it may prove especially fertile in rhetoric and composition, fields where research and theory tend to involve "the blurring of disciplinary boundaries characteristic of the postmodern academy" (Lunsford and Lauer 109) and where readers may bring a variety of perspectives to their reading of any given study.

Furthermore, while the field of rhetoric and composition abounds with studies examining writers' processes of creating short texts under laboratory conditions, several sources in this study already have established the paucity of studies examining writers' processes of creating longer, research-based texts for college classes. Accordingly, this study occasionally presents data not immediately connected with any theoretical framework. Such material is not presented just to tell a few stories; rather, it is presented as data potentially valuable to other researchers who will apply theoretical frameworks other than those used here.

**Limitations of the Study**

At least four limitations to this study exist, all of them characteristic of any ethnographically-oriented study. First, caution must be used in generalizing from the data.
Although as wide a range as possible of college classes, research-writing assignments, and students was sought, the sample ultimately consists of twenty-four college undergraduates in eight classes. One cannot assume that other students would react as these students did under similar circumstances, nor can one assume that these students would react in the same ways under different circumstances.

Second, access to data was limited. Although most of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, occasionally a student from the sample would drop in unexpectedly when no tape recorder was available, or the batteries for a tape recorder would go dead in mid-interview, so that some interviews were reconstructed from notes taken during the interviews. Also, because the students were completing assignments which in most cases would be the most important grade in their course, they were understandably reluctant to tolerate relatively disruptive investigative techniques. As Stephen North observes, in qualitative studies "gathering data is always a compromise between what the investigator would like to know and what, in terms of intrusiveness, it will cost him to find out" (295). Many of the students were willing to be observed as they sought sources in the library, but only two were willing to talk out their thoughts as they read sources in a "reading-aloud protocol," and none was willing to talk out her thoughts as she composed the paper. Because research-paper assignments are completed over a period of
weeks, the researcher cannot always be present when an important event occurs—for example, when a student's sudden insight flashes through his muddled thoughts as he lies in bed, not yet quite asleep.

Third, investigation is by its very nature intrusive, and so it inevitably affects results. The Hawthorne effect—the tendency of people to behave differently precisely because they are being studied—is firmly established as a limitation to any study in which humans know that they are the subject of study. And of course, people react not only to the fact that they are being studied, but also to the person who is studying them. In the case of this particular study, I am a middle-class white male who was in his late 30's when the field research for this study took place. Moreover, almost invariably, when I was introduced to a class from which I sought volunteers for my study, I was introduced as a college English teacher as well as a researcher—and I was introduced by the teacher of the class. In fact, two of the twenty-four students in the sample had previously taken classes from me, while some of the others knew people who had taken classes from me. All of these elements in my background undoubtedly affected the behavior not only of the students but of the teachers as well. Goetz and LeCompte warn researchers against being introduced to potential sample members by a person in power (88), and Diesing warns that if one enters the scene as "a teacher-like person," then "the official culture will be
presented and the unofficial culture hidden" (4-5). In addition, when teachers are interviewed by researchers, the teachers often base their accounts on "descriptions of what is socially acceptable, rather than what teachers actually do" (Goetz and LeCompte 110). And in a well-known study based on interviews with college students, William Perry observed that "most people appear to be responsive, even unconsciously, to 'selective reinforcement' from their listeners" (25).

At the same time, I enjoyed certain advantages in my attempts to elicit candid accounts and behaviors from the students and teachers. Because I myself was doing what the students were doing, conducting research to be used in an essay which would cite that research, it was relatively simple for me to accomplish one of the goals of the qualitative researcher: "to become, in one sense, an acceptable member of the community under investigation" (North, Making 294). Also, most of the students were aware of the distortion in most well-known portrayals of students' responses to research-paper assignments, whether in composition-textbook descriptions of idealized students diligently scouring libraries for sources or in campus lore about party-goers who throw together papers in last-ditch all-nighters and who still receive better grades than did classmates who worked on the assignment for weeks. Simply by expressing an honest, rather naive curiosity as to what really happens, I could establish what Goetz and LeCompte describe as the ideal situation for qualitative-research
interviews: one in which the informants rightfully view themselves as the experts and the researcher as the novice (88-89). In addition, I already enjoyed good relationships with the two students and the three teachers from the sample whom I had known prior to the research. Thus, I believe that almost without exception, the students and teachers quickly adjusted to my presence in their classrooms and in the library, and that they welcomed the opportunity to get their perspectives on record during interviews, so that the Hawthorne effect in most cases was rather minimal. But of course, I cannot know this. Therefore, I must insert an addendum to my earlier statement that I cannot know how these students would behave under different circumstances: one such set of circumstances would be for them to have completed the same assignments for the same teachers without my having intruded on their processes.

Just as my personal and professional background influences how others perceive and behave toward me, so it also affects how I perceive people, situations, and events. Researcher bias, then, is the fourth limitation of this study. My perspective on the people and events of this study is colored not only by the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter, but also by my ethnic background, my gender, my age, my profession, and a host of other matters, undoubtedly including many of which I am unaware. As Vijay, one of the students in my sample, observed, "You have to look
for something to see it." My background surely influences what I looked for and what I did not look for.

Perhaps the most important influence on my perceptions is the fact that because I am one of the novice researchers alluded to earlier, I tend to reflect the currently fashionable perspectives of my academic specialty, Rhetoric and Composition. As Stephen North observes in The Making of Meaning in Composition, researchers in composition often regard everyday English teachers and their conservative, "lore"-based methods with scarcely concealed contempt, an attitude so pervasive that it at times almost seems prerequisite to professional acceptance. While I regard my views as honestly come by, I cannot be certain of the extent to which they reflect that subtle, sophisticated, but terribly powerful form of peer pressure any discourse community exerts on a novice seeking recognition by that community. In short, to return to a theme discussed earlier in this chapter, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the "self" behind these words is socially constructed, the extent to which my thoughts have been formed and shaped by the thoughts of others. In any event, readers would do well to bear in mind what they know of my background as they read the remaining chapters of this study, chapters in which traditionalist teachers and their methods of teaching writing are sometimes portrayed rather unflatteringly.
A Definition

As Richard Larson's criticisms of the "generic research paper" make clear, distinguishing a research paper from other texts is no easy matter. Given that this dissertation studies the processes of students completing assignments, it seems wiser to define the research-paper assignment. In this study, a research-paper assignment is any assignment requiring the student to produce an essay which uses data acquired through investigation of other sources besides the writer's memory and which cites those sources within the text itself. Thus, "research" may include field research and laboratory research as well as the library research associated with the "generic research paper."

In this study, all 24 of the students in the sample used books and/or periodicals, and 23 of the 24 located at least some of their sources in a library. Two students also used television documentaries as sources, with one locating the documentary in a library's audiovisual collection and the other borrowing a VCR tape from a teacher. In addition, four students sought to supplement their library research with personal interviews, although only two of the four succeeded in doing so. Finally, two students used library research only incidentally, as a supplement to a series of laboratory experiments.
Organization of the Study

Chapter Two, a review of related literature, discusses other "voices" which have influenced this study besides those mentioned in this chapter. Chapter Three describes the research methods employed in the study. Chapters Four through Eight present the results, examining the processes of:

--six Basic Writers in an open-door community college (Chapter Four).

--five First-Year Composition students at an open-door community college, four of whom were writing papers on literary topics. Two of the five were also writing papers for a sociology class (Chapter Five).

--six First-Year Composition students at a somewhat selective University writing papers on general topics (Chapter Six).

--four Advanced Composition students at a somewhat selective University writing papers on general topics (Chapter Seven).

--three honors students at a somewhat selective University writing senior theses, two in chemistry and one in history (Chapter Eight).

Chapter Nine draws conclusions and suggests implications for further research and for teaching.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"These two years have been devoted not so much to actual writing as to the research demanded by a task to which practically no limits can be set and to the reading of innumerable authors."
---Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, I, i

The research questions guiding this dissertation—"What do students do in completing research-paper assignments, and why do they do it?"—are less sprawling than the issues Quintilian faced when he wrote his overview of rhetoric. But Quintilian did not have to contend with the modern-day information explosion. Given the proliferation of research and the fact that my research questions necessarily touch on a number of fields, the overview of related literature that follows must necessarily be selective.

Origins of the Research-Paper Assignment

James Berlin and Robert Connors both describe the research-paper assignment as becoming widespread in American universities during the 1920’s. Examination of old composition textbooks and old journal articles confirms this chronology. Material about research papers almost never appears in composition textbooks published prior to the mid-1920’s, but almost always appears in composition textbooks published from 1930 onward. College English published its
first article about research-paper instruction in 1923 (Ford and Perry 826), a chronology which suggests that in the 1920’s as today, ideas from scholarly journals began showing up in textbooks after a few years’ lapse.

Berlin observes that the research-paper assignment was made possible by upgraded college library collections and by creation of information-retrieval systems such as the Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature. But he argues that English teachers adopted the research-paper assignment for less-than-ideal reasons: first, because teachers naturally gravitated toward teaching the research-based writing which was the source of their own professional advancement; second, because the research paper fit with the growing "insistence in current-traditional rhetoric on finding meaning outside the composing act, with writing itself serving as a simple transcription process" (70), the goal of which was "to report, not interpret" (63). Similarly, Connors states that in these early assignments, research was "often unconnected to any writing purpose beyond amassing brute facts into a ‘research paper’" (178). Connors adds that the research-paper assignment was also a reaction against the growing domination of personal-writing assignments in composition during the early twentieth century (178-79).

However, examination of early textbooks and articles suggests that Berlin and Connors may overgeneralize a bit in associating the genesis of the research paper with the
"current-traditional paradigm." In one of the first scholarly articles about the assignment, Robert W. Frederick in 1924 advocates the research paper (which he calls a "term report") as a way of liberating students from the role of passive recipients of professors' lectures and thus as a way of putting them in charge of their own learning (257). Although Frederick's wordings may sound quaint, as when he advocates individual conferences by suggesting that "perhaps the best teaching is done in an office in the library where a chap can come to . . . chew over a theory" (258), his ideas sound more contemporary than "current-traditional." Students in a 1931 survey, by a more than two-to-one margin, preferred to conduct "original investigations with the student's opinions being evaluated" rather than "a summary of known facts and opinions" (Brown and Baldwin 312), indicating that not all research-paper assignments called for informational reports. In fact, Henry Lathrop's 1920 textbook *Freshman Composition* states:

Books and other authorities may be the basis of two sorts of written compositions. In the one, the ideas of the authority are simply restated, usually in shorter form; in the other, the authority is used as raw material, and worded into something substantially new, which bears the impress of the writer's mind. . . . The second exercise is a genuine exercise in original composition, and has the use of communicating the writer's own thought. . . . In such writing the knowledge drawn from books becomes part of his own mind as completely as the knowledge drawn from his own direct observation and experience, and is used in the same way. (336)

Finally, Percy Boynton's influential 1915 textbook *Principles of Composition*, although published prior to the time when
composition textbooks began discussing citations, nevertheless argues for student writing based on reading, preferably of two sources who disagree, because "This disagreement . . . forces a student to take sides and so to use his own judgment" (13-14--underlining mine). Evidently, then, almost as long as the assignment has existed there has been disagreement as to whether student research papers should be purely informative reports or whether they should involve original analysis.

Regardless of the motives behind its origin, the research-paper assignment is now firmly established in composition programs and across the undergraduate curriculum. As discussed in the first few pages of Chapter One, although a large portion of most First-Year Composition courses focuses on research-paper instruction and although the most common college-level writing assignments across the curriculum involve research-based writing, composition researchers have largely ignored the research-paper assignment. As a result, we know relatively little about students' processes of completing such assignments. We do, however, know a considerable amount about writers' processes of completing writing tasks in general--their ways of defining the task, selecting a topic and an audience, planning, writing, and revising. We also possess considerable knowledge about such research-paper-related matters as students' attitudes toward and behavior in libraries and students' reading skills.
Task Representation

As discussed on pages 15-16 of Chapter One, Linda Flower, John Hayes, and their colleagues at Carnegie-Mellon University have examined how students' definitions of the writing tasks assigned to them affect their plans for completing the papers and affect the papers themselves. In the 1980 article which presents the central concepts the Carnegie-Mellon group has elaborated over the past decade, Flower and Hayes argue that good writers more fully explore the "unique rhetorical problem" implicit in any writing assignment (25), thus not only setting more ambitious goals but also providing themselves with "a powerful strategy for generating new ideas and exploring . . . a topic . . ." (30). By 1988, Christina Haas and Flower state that a rhetorically complex task representation benefits readers as well as writers. They note that in a study involving the reading strategies of first-year college students and of graduate students, the graduate students made "an active attempt at constructing a rhetorical context for the text as a way of making sense of it" (167-68), while the first-year students did not.

Having studied rhetorical stance and task representation in students' writing and in students' reading, the Carnegie-Mellon group eventually examined the same issues in "reading-to-write," that is, in preparing to write essays using sources. In a 1989 study of fluent and less fluent readers who read a series of sources and wrote essays summarizing
those sources, Carnegie-Mellon faculty members Nancy Spivey and James R. King conclude, "The better readers . . . were apparently setting a different kind of task for themselves" than were the weaker readers (20). Similarly, in a Carnegie-Mellon doctoral dissertation about students' approaches to writing essays synthesizing information from various sources, Margaret Kantz suggests that "good synthesizers set themselves different goals than do weak synthesizers" (Composing 182) and that "writers of good syntheses solve different problems than do writers of poor syntheses" (Composing 185). She argues that the most successful writers use source material as the basis for constructing arguments rather than as self-evident truth—in Aristotelian terms, as artistic rather than inartistic proofs (Composing 164, 179-80).

The Carnegie-Mellon group has consistently argued that their findings have strong pedagogical implications. Flower and Hayes conclude their 1980 article by stating that rhetorical problem-solving strategies are "eminently teachable" and that composition teachers should encourage their students to adopt these strategies (31-32). Kantz argues in a 1990 College English article that teachers need to explore ways to encourage rhetorical reading and writing:

Rhetorical reading and writing heuristics can help students to represent tasks in rich and interesting ways. They can help students to set up complex goal structures. . . . They offer students many ways to think about their reading and writing texts. These tools, in other words, encourage students to work creatively. ("Helping" 86)
Kantz advocates requiring multiple drafts of research papers and responding to drafts in ways that encourage students to read and write rhetorically ("Helping" 86). Similarly, after stating that "the way a writer defines his role in a given writing situation plays a part in determining how he approaches the assigned task" (7), Jennie Nelson and Hayes argue that students may be encouraged to foster more ambitious research-paper task representations through a teacher’s providing intermediate feedback on rough drafts or research journals or in conferences, focusing on high-level goals rather than on students’ ability to summarize sources’ material in error-free form, providing an audience beyond the teacher, and requiring students to begin working on the project early (18-20).

The repetition not only of ideas but of key phrases in these works implies an unusually tightly-focused discourse community—bees hovering around a central Flower. The image is not entirely playful, since it suggests the fecundity resulting from transferring material into new situations—from writing to reading to reading-to-write. One advantage of the Carnegie-Mellon group’s approach has been the fruitfulness that results when a group of researchers works together on a common problem, not only discovering new ideas but extending existing ones.

There are, however, limitations. First, besides relying on Flower and Hayes’s ideas, group members also almost
invariably use some variation on Flower and Hayes's research methods. Thus, the Carnegie-Mellon group generally studies the behavior not of students completing assignments to be graded for a course, but of students who are either paid volunteers or else are satisfying a course requirement by participating in an experiment. The students are not framing their own topics and finding appropriate sources for those topics. Instead, they are given topics, a hypothetical audience, and a packet of sources to use. Finally, the students must speak their thoughts into a tape recorder as they read the sources and plan the essay. Stephen North's reaction to "composing aloud" studies comes to mind: "What, then, is the relationship between this strange activity and what people actually do when they write?" (Making 220).

Moreover, later studies may suffer from bias as researchers struggle to fit results into an existing "party line." The latter problem may be especially acute in works by the group's junior members, as when Kantz echoes Flower's wordings in a dissertation for which Flower chaired the dissertation committee.

Interestingly, Flower herself has been the group member least committed to any "party line." In The Role of Task Representation in Reading-to-Write, she describes adopting a rhetorical stance in reading-to-write tasks as a risky, if potentially highly rewarding, choice for students (14). She also suggests that writing syntheses or rhetorical-stance
interpretations is not always a more complex cognitive task than writing summaries, that moving from summary to synthesis or interpretation is not inherently "natural" as students progress through school, and that teachers should not automatically encourage students to write syntheses or interpretations rather than summaries (20-26). Flower notes that in the study on which her report was based, half of the students did not look closely at the written assignment, but rather "simply invoked their standard strategy," with that "standard strategy" varying widely from student to student (29). Given that no one reading-to-write strategy is likely to suit all source-based-writing situations a student will encounter in college, Flower argues, teachers should help students to be aware of their choices and help them to choose appropriately among alternatives that present cost-benefit tradeoffs (20-29).

Others also suggest the need for closer teacher/student communication regarding task representation. Mina Shaughnessy suggests that Basic Writers have difficulty with academic writing in part because of their unfamiliarity with audience expectations and thus with what the task entails (Errors 240, 269; "Basic" 165). In a study of 39 high-school seniors, mostly honors students, working on research papers, Molly Haskell found that the five English teachers involved in the study all defined the task primarily in terms of students’ learning from the process, whereas the students never
mentioned learning as a goal, instead defining the task in terms of assembling a product which would not involve excessive effort but which would receive an acceptable grade (179-80). And as discussed in Chapter One, Robert Schwedler and Linda Shamoon report that college students consistently tend to define research papers in less ambitious ways than do college teachers, a finding which supports the Carnegie-Mellon group's view that teachers should encourage students to adopt more ambitious task representations.

However, convincing students to adopt more ambitious task representations will not be easy. Adopting a rhetorical stance requires independent thought. But college students have already experienced at least twelve years in a school system in which institutional realities--thirty children and one adult in a crowded room, arriving, eating, playing, and leaving on a schedule announced by bells--inevitably cause conformity to be rewarded (LeCompte). As Donald Murray observes, "... taking orders, not taking the initiative, is the way to get into college" (142). In terms of writing itself, then, students come to learn that "The good student writer is the polite student writer" (Emig 72). After at least twelve years of conformity, students may not easily accept being asked for original thought. To further complicate the matter, original thinking now becomes a teacher-pleasing, and thus a subtly conformist, behavior. Stephen North describes students' probable reactions in a
class in which Ken Macrorie demands "truthtelling" in writing: "What game is he playing? What does he really want?" (Making 47) As William G. Perry, Jr., observes, "... where independence of mind is demanded by authority, its forms can be mastered and 'handed in' while the spirit remains obediently conformist" (36). Finally, as Flower points out, adopting a rhetorical stance is risky behavior—and Haskell cites a range of studies demonstrating that students seek to decrease risk in assignments to such an extent that when one study required original thought of high school students, the students "refused to cooperate and argued that they had a right to be told what to do" (24-25).

Topics

While the concept of task representation explains why no two students in a class will fulfill the same writing assignment in quite the same way, students nevertheless must represent the task in a way that will satisfy the assignment. Disputes persist regarding the extent to which students should be limited in their choice of topics, both for writing in general and for research papers in particular.

Donald Murray asserts that students should be free to write about whatever they choose and that overly restrictive assignments "guarantee bad writing" (26). However, after examining a number of studies, George Hillocks, Jr., concludes that variations in assigned topics have little or no effect on the quality of student writing (170-73). And in an article
from an anthology on library instruction, Bobbie Collins, Constance Mellon, and Sally Young criticize the "write on anything you’re interested in" approach to research papers, stating, "More than one scared student has begged the reference librarian to ‘tell me what I’m interested in’" (76).

Carol Kuhlthau’s study of 27 high-school students working on research papers provides somewhat inconclusive information regarding topic selection. On a questionnaire, the students as a group expressed a small but clear preference for selecting their own topic rather than having a teacher assign a topic (147-48). However, when six of the students were interviewed for case studies, Kuhlthau found that they frequently reported conflict between what they found personally interesting and what they believed the teacher would consider appropriate, so that even when allowed to choose their own topics, the students often chose topics which would please the teacher (152-53, 210). Perhaps as a result, Kuhlthau found that the level of students’ interest in their topics was not strongly affected by the issue of whether they chose their own topics or were assigned topics (192-94).

Regardless of the process of topic selection, students seem to produce better writing when dealing with topics with which they are already somewhat familiar. Summarizing results of a number of studies, Janet Ramig states, "Students write with greater facility and greater success about those subjects that are close to their own personal experience as opposed to
those distinct from them" (36-37). Even in research-based writing, where personal experience is less likely to play a part, familiarity with the subject is apparently an asset. Kantz cites a study by V.C. Hare which demonstrated that when students read material on a subject about which they knew relatively little, they used fewer comprehension-monitoring strategies (Composing 58), as well as a study by Weinstein and Rogers in which "the college students that they observed generally neglected to notice whether they understood what they read" (Composing 36), suggesting that comprehension-monitoring strategies at times shut down altogether. Thus, an investigation of a wholly unfamiliar topic may be too much to ask of most First-Year Composition students facing research-paper assignments.

The importance of student familiarity with topics leads to the issue of whether or not to require students to write their research papers on literary topics, topics often more familiar to English teachers than to their students. In the Ford and Perry survey, only one of the 397 responding colleges, universities, and community colleges required that composition students' research papers be on literary topics (828). Yet all 39 students in all five high-school English classes studied by Haskell were required to write on literary topics, and the 27 high-school students in the Kuhlthau study were working on two successive English-class research-paper assignments, both of which required literary topics.
Conceivably, just as college composition teachers tend to defend the research-paper assignment as being "good practice for other college writing" (Connors 178), so high-school English teachers equate training students to conduct literary research with preparing students for college—a mistaken equation, judging from the Ford and Perry survey.

Perhaps appropriately, community colleges seem to occupy a position halfway between that of the high schools and that of the universities on the issue of requiring literary topics. In Ramig's study, out of five teachers at a single community college, two required their first-year composition students to choose literary topics for their research papers and three did not. This finding reminds us that requirements within an individual classroom may be quite different from the program-wide requirements measured in the Ford and Perry survey.

Finally, writing from the librarians' perspective, Constance Mellon suggests that faculty members' handling of research-paper topics leaves much to be desired:

> Faculty assume that they are capable of designing effective library assignments and of instructing students in the complexities of information retrieval. . . . As most reference librarians will verify, a day at the reference desk is sufficient to demonstrate the inaccuracy of these assumptions. (9)

**Audience/Discourse Community**

The college students interviewed by Schwegler and Shamoorn tended to describe the audience for research papers as "a professor who already knows about the subject and is testing the student's knowledge and information-gathering ability"
(819) -- the teacher-as-examiner, in James Britton's phrase. Such an assumed audience has considerable drawbacks, at least in theory. First, as Arthur Applebee has pointed out, the teacher-as-examiner is an extremely undemanding audience as far as requiring writing skill is concerned (51). Teachers who already know the subject "may be tempted to treat unclear prose gently, supplying missing information and reading for what the student 'meant to say'" (5). Second, such an audience is unnatural since, as Peter Elbow writes, "The natural direction of communication is to explain what you understand to someone who doesn't understand it" (219). The students interviewed by Schwegler and Shamoon tended to define research papers as informative reports (819), and as James Kinneavy notes, "Informative essays . . . are usually written down to a generally less-informed audience . . . ." (95). If students write informative (or pseudoinformative) discourse for an audience already more informed than they are about the subject, they are, in Elbow's words, "swimming against the stream" of natural communication (219). Finally, this undemanding, unnatural audience surely limits the educational value of writing. In his preface to Searching Writing, Ken Macrorie criticizes the traditional research paper by stating that "no individuals learn by giving back to authorities the accepted work the authorities have given them." In theory, then, individuals could surely learn more by writing for an audience other than teacher-as-examiner.
Research does not, however, always support theory. In his synthesis of thousands of writing-instruction studies, Hillocks describes only three studies, all involving high-school students, in which essays or letters written for an audience of teachers were holistically compared with essays or letters written for an audience of parents, classmates, or general readers. In two of these three, the texts written for teachers were rated as statistically significantly better than the texts written for other audiences, and in the third case there was no significant difference (87, 170-73). Furthermore, the case in which the difference in holistic ratings was most dramatic was the single case in which the audience was teacher-as-examiner in the most traditional sense: the students knew that their teacher would not only read their texts, but also grade them (171).

The studies described by Hillocks dramatize the complications inherent in trying to get students to write for an audience other than teachers. Although one of the studies involved raters from the actual audience categories (parents, classmates, teachers), students' writing in the other two was presumably rated exclusively by teachers, who might be expected to prefer texts directed toward teachers. But the same is true with research papers: even if a teacher asks students to write research papers for a wider audience, almost invariably the teacher is still the person grading the paper. As mentioned earlier, Haskell’s study portrays the research
paper writers in her sample as concerned almost exclusively with the grade (179-80), while Howard Becker, Blanche Geer, and Everett Hughes describe college students' academic life as dominated by a "grade-point-average perspective" (28-42). If a teacher specifies a wider audience but remains the sole grader, then the audience for most students probably becomes the teacher as the students imagine that teacher to imagine the wider audience's reading habits. And as Elbow points out, the "general reader" that teachers sometimes tell students to write for turns out to be one who "reads in a peculiar way that no one else but teachers try to read" (222).

On one hand, then, there are obvious problems with having students write for a teacher-as-examiner audience that knows more about the subject than the students do. On the other hand, students remain highly motivated by grades. One partial solution to this dilemma returns us to topic selection: in composition classes, perhaps students should be encouraged to write research papers on topics about which they are (or can become) more knowledgeable than their teachers.

For more discipline-specific research papers, a partial solution may be to encourage students to broaden their view of a teacher-audience by considering their teachers as members of discourse communities within a particular academic discipline. Schwegler and Shamoorn observe that the instructors they interviewed often considered the research-paper assignment as a means "to get students to think . . . like a literary
critic, a sociologist, an art historian, or a chemist" and that they often assigned and evaluated research papers based on their view of "what a scholarly research article is and does, adapted of course to an undergraduate level" (820-21). Similarly, Kantz has noted that "the structure of research papers in different disciplines is directed by and follows from the research methodology of the discipline" (Composing 23). Patricia Bizzell and Kenneth Bruffee extend the discourse-community view to all language use in school, not simply research-paper writing and evaluation. Bizzell states that "educational problems associated with language use should be understood as difficulties in joining an unfamiliar discourse community" (225-26), while Bruffee states that "the one thing college teachers in most fields commonly want students to acquire, and what teachers in most fields consistently reward students for, is the ability to carry on in speech and writing the normal discourse of the field in question" (643). Ann Berthoff carries the idea outward from writing to thinking as she observes, "Ideas in any field are not only what we think about; they are also what we think with" (4).

Recent emphasis on discourse community has led some composition theorists to question the value of first-year composition's "generic" research paper. As noted earlier, the composition-class research paper has traditionally been defended as practice for later, discipline-specific writing.
But given the powerful influence of a discourse community, can generic research-based writing significantly prepare students for research-based writing within the community?

Evidently reacting to this issue, Susan Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch report success teaching the research paper "within the rhetorical context of the academic community . . . teaching students how to think and write as members of that community" (8). Dinitz and Kiedaisch define the academic community as "a group of people who pursue knowledge for its own sake, apart from the limits of practical considerations or personal interests" (9). Thus, they write:

If students want to research which personal computer would be best for them to buy, we explain that . . . [t]hey need to re-phrase the question so the conclusion will be of more general interest, such as "Does owning a personal computer improve a student’s academic achievement?" (9)

However, many composition theorists would argue that an assignment aimed for a generalized "academic community" is inadequate preparation for learning to write for a discourse community within a specific academic discipline. As Joseph Williams and Gregory C. Colomb have noted, even experienced, successful student writers tend to write like unskilled beginners when put in the position of novices learning to write for a new (to them) discourse community (102-03). Thus in a 1980 article, Stephen North argues that the research-paper assignment should be abolished from First-Year Composition because such a large assignment cannot succeed as preparation for "real" writing somewhere else and because
first-year students lack the subject-area knowledge necessary to write with authority using sources from any particular discipline ("Teaching" 17-18). North suggests that the research paper should be taught as a workshop course on at least the sophomore level, tied in to a specific discipline. This model, North argues, "moves research writing away from Freshman English and toward the disciplines, where it belongs" (19).

North does not specify whether the workshop course should be taught by English faculty or by faculty in the specific disciplines to which the research would be tied. Nevertheless, in the decade or so since North's article, discipline-specific-writing classes have proliferated, often taught by members of the English department. But just as it is extremely difficult for nonmembers to write for members of a discourse community, so it is difficult for nonmembers to read like members of a discourse community. As a result, English teachers have found their discipline-specific-writing classes to be challenging teaching assignments. Lester Faigley and Kristine Hansen describe a case study of a student submitting the same paper for a sociology class and for an English department's Writing in the Social Sciences class. The two teachers gave the paper dramatically different grades and, in written comments as well as interviews, reacted almost entirely to different elements in the paper. And the elements each teacher reacted to reflected that teacher's disciplinary
background: the English teacher discussed wordings, mechanics, and "the standards of a handbook notion of an essay"; the sociology teacher discussed content, but content couched within such discipline-based concepts as "whether [the student] should have included confidence levels for correlations" (146-48). Faigley and Hansen, themselves English teachers, conclude:

What appeared to us as relatively minor issues of form in [the student’s] paper . . . reflected larger issues of how a discipline thinks. The conventional four-part organization of a psychology report specified in the APA Style Sheet embodies a world view about how knowledge can be verified, a world view that few English teachers share or are willing to assimilate. (148)

Similarly, Shamoon and Schwegler took papers which had received A’s or B’s in sociology classes and rewrote them, attempting to keep the meanings unaltered while eliminating technical terminology as much as possible. As English teachers, Shamoon and Schwegler evidently viewed the rewritten papers as at least equal to the originals, and possibly superior in that they conformed to the composition-class advice to "avoid jargon." But when sociology teachers were asked to evaluate the rewritten papers, they viewed them as "seriously flawed." Although the rewritten papers were "consistently developed informative texts with clear thesis statements and topic sentences appropriate to the aims of discourse," the sociology teachers "failed to notice this way of understanding the papers" (77-78). The sociology teachers "complained about the lack of analytical statements--even
though these statements were for the most part retained in the altered texts" (79), although without the technical terminology. In another part of the same study, Shamoon and Schwegler altered the order of sentences within paragraphs of some papers. The sociology teachers did not appear to notice any coherence problems, whereas English teachers reading the papers did notice that the paragraphs had been "manipulated in some way" (79). Shamoon and Schwegler conclude that as writing instructors and researchers, we "need to observe more carefully the way our academic colleagues read to teach ourselves to read like them, or at least be willing to share some of their expectations and perceptions" (81).

As discussed on pages 13-14, Richard Larson argues that the "research paper" is "a non-form of writing" and that the research-paper assignment should be abolished from First-Year Composition. In making his case, Larson in essence summarizes the points just discussed: that research-based writing is discipline-specific and that most composition teachers cannot read as surrogates for faculty members in other disciplines. Larson concludes that although English teachers "pretend to prepare students to engage in the research appropriate to their chosen disciplines, we do not and cannot do so" (815).

**Library Use**

One complaint Larson lodges against the generic research paper is that it almost invariably centers on library research, whereas throughout the disciplines the library is
just one source for conducting research (814). His point is valid. However, the bulk of this dissertation examines the research paper as it is taught in college, with "what should be" considered only in response to "what is." And in existing studies of students' real-world behavior in completing research papers, the library looms dominant.

One theme consistently emerging from literature about students' library use is that teachers overestimate their students' library skills and knowledge. As mentioned in Chapter One, Kuhlthau states that despite "an epidemic of library illiteracy" among college students, "[m]ost instructors simply assume that college students know how to use a library and act accordingly" (1). Collins, Mellon, and Young suggest that college teachers, almost all of whom were good students in college, tend to assume that because they could handle library research as undergraduates, their students can, too. Collins, Mellon, and Young add that college librarians, dealing first-hand with students in libraries, expect far less from students, but still overestimate students' ability to generalize from learning to use one research tool to applying the same skills to another research tool (73). Moreover, in order to hide their ignorance of library skills, students will pretend to understand when they do not or will simply avoid the library (74-79). After studying research logs written by hundreds of First-Year Composition students, Collins, Mellon, and Young
report that "75 to 85 percent of students in every class studied described their initial response to using the library for research in terms of fear or anxiety" (78). One student wrote of the first visit to the university library, "It was like being in a foreign country and being unable to speak the language" (78).

In order to conduct library research despite this fear and anxiety, students must regard that research as important to their education or at least to their success on the assignment. Mellon argues that the main factor in students' attitudes toward library research is the attitude their professor displays toward that research (4-5). In a sense, Mellon's view is a corollary to the arguments put forth by Kantz and by Nelson and Hayes that the teacher may greatly influence students' task definitions. After all, one part of the task definition is "To what extent, if at all, must I conduct library research to complete this assignment?" Yet if the teacher's attitude influences the students' attitude toward library research, and if one aspect of many teachers' attitudes is that college students already know how to do library research, then the teacher's attitude may often contribute to students' tendency to avoid exposing their lack of library skills by going to the library and by asking for help when they need it.

Perhaps teachers are ignorant of their students' struggles in libraries partly because, as Stotsky concludes in
her 1991 literature-search article, "studies on the research process . . . are exceedingly few" (206). The most extensive such study may be Carol Kuhlthau's unpublished doctoral dissertation. Kuhlthau, at the time a high school librarian, examined the processes of 27 exceptionally competent high school seniors from the time the research-paper assignment was given until the time they began writing their papers. Kuhlthau divides the students' search processes into six stages: task initiation, topic selection, prefocus exploration, focus formulation, information collection, and search closure (189). She acknowledges, however, that the search process is not a precise, step-by-step movement, but rather is "a continuum with one stage blending into the next" and with "recursive movement back and forth among the stages and an occasional omission of a particular stage" (189). She also states that no two students in her study moved through the process at exactly the same pace (261). Throughout her dissertation, Kuhlthau stresses that teachers and librarians need to define library research within a search process viewpoint rather than a source (or product) viewpoint. In short, Kuhlthau's portrayal of the search process strikingly resembles composition theory's portrayal of the writing process. (Perhaps not coincidentally, Kuhlthau's dissertation committee was chaired by Janet Emig.)

But although Kuhlthau describes the research process and the writing process as similar to one another, she also
describes them as largely separate from one another. She states, "Although there may be occasions when the search process is reentered during the writing of the paper, the search is usually completed at the time the person starts writing" (18) and adds that the students in her study "considered the writing of the research paper as a separate process which followed the search process" (244).

Even though the students in Kuhlthau’s study were unusually bright and unusually familiar with libraries, their behavior fit Collins, Mellon, and Young’s assertion that students are reluctant to ask librarians for help (Kuhlthau 167-73). However, while Collins, Mellon, and Young suggest that students avoid asking for help for fear of appearing stupid, the students in Kuhlthau’s study seemed to have adopted almost an honor code of self-sufficiency: "Research was viewed as something that they do on their own" (171). The students were reluctant to seek help from their English teacher for the same reason, and in fact seemed to view required conferences as hidden tests of their progress on the assignment thus far (266).

In her study of 39 high-school seniors working on research papers, Molly Haskell also found students reluctant to seek help from teachers. Haskell suggests that one cause of this reluctance may have been fear of negative reactions from the teacher (184-85). In contrast, almost all the students in Haskell’s study sought help from librarians. The
stronger students sought help in finding material to supplement what they had found on their own; the weaker students needed help to find anything at all and often asked for help without even trying to find anything on their own (119-121).

Although Haskell portrays most students in the study as concerned with expending as little effort as possible, her study nevertheless suggests that the students did expend some effort in searching for sources. Thirty-six of the 39 students sought sources in more than one library, and 28 of the 39 sought sources in three or more places, including bookstores and friends' houses as well as libraries (105, 217). Most, however, used only the card catalog and the bookshelves as search resources, altogether ignoring periodicals and other non-book sources. Haskell's students were not unusual in this respect: Kuhlthau states that "several studies . . . have found that most students consult the card catalog in the library to the exclusion of all other access tools" (69). Also, given that the students in Haskell's study were required to write on literary topics, the periodicals index they as high school seniors were likeliest to use, the Reader's Guide, would have done them little good. At any rate, once they located sources, most students in Haskell's study were either unaware of or indifferent to the fact that some sources are more appropriate than others (110). Although some of the more ambitious students read works by the
authors they were writing about in order to find a thesis and
then selected sources which seemed likeliest to provide
information relevant to that thesis (98, 110), many students
simply checked out the first sources they found and stopped
when they had the minimum number of sources required for the
paper (113). The students reported spending anywhere from
less than an hour to close to twenty hours searching in
libraries, with the mean and median both around three hours
(116-17).

Findings vary regarding how far in advance of the paper’s
due date students begin their library research. In Haskell’s
study, students were given their research-paper assignments 10
to 21 weeks before the paper was due, and roughly half of the
students began researching one to two weeks after the
assignments were given. However, most of the remaining
students did little or nothing until a week or two before the
assignment was due (131-32). The four community-college
students interviewed as part of a study by Janet Ramig all
expressed frustration at not having had longer than the ten-
week quarter to complete their research papers (110). On the
other hand, the six students Kuhlthau interviewed as part of
her study generally viewed about four weeks as the optimum
amount of time to spend working on a research paper (246). As
Kuhlthau observes, no two students move through the process at
the same pace.
Reading

Of course, it is not enough to find sources; one must also use them. While task representation, discussed earlier, undoubtedly plays a major role in students' use of sources, so does a more obvious factor: reading ability. When writing is based on sources, fluent readers understandably have an advantage over less fluent readers. Nancy Spivey cites various studies revealing that fluent readers not only recall more of what they read than do poor readers, but also are more likely than poor readers to recall major ideas and relevant information rather than irrelevant details (4-6). This suggests that fluent readers can overcome undisciplined notetaking habits in ways that less fluent readers cannot. Spivey also cites studies indicating that fluent readers write more unified, organized texts than do less fluent readers, both in general and when responding to a reading assignment in particular. In Spivey's own study, 40 college juniors and seniors, classified into two groups of 20 according to their reading-test scores, were asked to write essays synthesizing material from several encyclopedia articles on a given subject. When the essays were rated holistically, 17 of the 20 highest-rated essays came from the higher-rated group of readers (22).

In another study conducted by Spivey and James King, students differing in grade levels (sixth, eighth, and tenth graders), as well as in reading fluency, were asked to write...
essays summarizing material from several articles on a given subject. Unsurprisingly, older students and more fluent readers tended to produce higher-rated essays than did younger students and less fluent readers (13), with students’ reading-ability scores proving to be far better than students’ grade levels as predictors of essay quality (16). The more fluent readers were able to organize material from sources into large units, whereas less fluent readers sometimes tended to produce streams of seemingly unrelated facts (17), a result that fits with the already-mentioned findings that fluent readers tend to recall more relevant information and to write more organized texts. In a study by Mary Lynch Kennedy, six college students, three with relatively high reading scores and three with relatively low reading scores, were given three expository passages and asked to write an objective essay based on those passages. All three fluent readers produced essays more highly rated than any of the essays produced by the three less fluent readers (452). Similarly, in a study by K.K. Taylor, professional writers invariably wrote higher-rated summaries of sources than did nonprofessional writers (691-99).

Planning

Although the reading studies empirically confirm the commonsensical belief that more fluent readers produce better reading-based writing, those studies are less clear about possible correlations between measurable planning and quality
of the final product. In Spivey's (25-27) and Taylor's (695-97) studies, there was no statistically significant correlation between visible measures of the task process—quantity of underlining and of notes, time spent writing, number of revisions—and the essays' quality ratings. This may be important because some English teachers, including one in the sample discussed in this study, grade student work partly on the basis of visible evidence of the student's writing process.

However, Kennedy's study and Spivey and King's study both did find correlations between visible process and quality of product. Spivey and King write, "The better readers were making more elaborate plans and spending more time" on the task (20), while Kennedy's fluent readers took more notes than did her less fluent readers (443-444). In fact Kennedy, whose study also involved reading-aloud protocols, described distinctly different characteristic processes for the two groups. The fluent readers generally read actively, commenting aloud and taking notes, reread sources and notes, and planned before writing, then put the sources aside and consulted only the notes while writing the essays. In contrast, the less fluent readers took fewer notes, reread less, and planned less prior to writing, then consulted the sources frequently while writing, often to find a direct quotation to incorporate in their essays (448-51). This contrast suggests that in some cases and to some degree,
"fluency" may be a matter of convincing oneself to care sufficiently about a task. The contrast also echoes the Carnegie-Mellon group's view that fluent writers, readers, and synthesizers are setting themselves different tasks and solving different problems from those set and solved by their less fluent counterparts.

Of course, whether or not visible evidence of planning correlates with quality of the finished product, planning may exist even without visible evidence. After describing a number of studies of the writing process, Hillocks notes that "lack of prefiguring does not necessarily reflect a lack of planning" (5).

Although Kuhlthau's study does not deal with the presence or absence of written plans, it contains useful information regarding the evolving mental plans of students as they investigate topics on which they will eventually write papers. Kuhlthau suggests that one key to a successful search process is the ability to "sustain ambiguity and uncertainty" regarding the paper's focus while simultaneously recognizing the need to formulate a focus eventually. On one hand, students often encountered difficulty if they began researching a topic while holding preconceived notions regarding what they would say about the topic (221) or if they were unwilling to adapt their planned focus to accommodate the information they found (242). On the other hand, some students never found a focus at all, in some cases because
they were unaware that research papers needed a focus (216, 232)—another indication of the role of task representation. As with task representation, sustaining ambiguity may be a skill more psychological than intellectual: if one realizes that a focus is a prerequisite to success on a major assignment, then finding a focus releases tension and provides gratification. And as everyone from dieters to hunters to lovers can testify, extending tension and delaying gratification can require considerable self-control.

Extravagant comparisons notwithstanding, many authorities confirm Kuhlthau's point about the importance of sustaining ambiguity, not only during research but in synthesizing, writing, revising, and academic thinking in general. In her conclusions about what caused some students' syntheses of sources to be better than others, Kantz states, "Another important skill appears to be . . . being able to postpone decisions and think about several things at once. . . ." (Composing 187). In a study of revision, Flanigan and Menendez state, "Students resist writing and rewriting as discovery; they prefer early closure of content and form" (263). Donald Murray urges writers in general to "resist the instinct to fit all new information into previously constructed meanings. The writer has to encourage the gathering of contradictory and predictable information which will force old meanings to adapt and new ones to be constructed" (22). And Stephen Perry widens the focus beyond
writing and writing instruction to instruction in general and thinking itself, as he writes that in a world where "facts" are increasingly unclear, "The good teacher becomes one who supports in his students a more sustained groping, exploration, and synthesis" (211).

Nevertheless, Perry’s "good teacher" will probably meet considerable resistance from students. In studies cited by Haskell, students consistently resisted not only tasks high in risk, but also tasks high in ambiguity (24-25).

Despite the need to "sustain ambiguity" regarding the focus of the research paper, Kuhlthau argues that ideally, the student should find a focus during the search process, before starting to write the first draft—and that most of the students in her study did so (251). This view seems somewhat at odds with the view, held by Murray and others, that the first draft is essentially a "discovery draft." As discussed on pages 16 and 17, Sandra Stotsky, relying on Kuhlthau’s findings, suggests that the most fruitful time of "discovery" in the processes of most students writing research papers comes before those students begin their first drafts.

At first, Kuhlthau’s findings and Stotsky’s theories seem to suggest that the current-traditional teachers who supposedly championed the research paper have gotten what Berlin claims they wanted: an assignment in which composing serves as a mere transcription process for knowledge discovered outside the composing act. However, as Hillocks
notes after reviewing pioneering writing-process studies by Emig, Stallard, Pianko, and Perl, "The data in these studies suggest that most writers have a strong conception of what they will write before they begin writing or shortly after they rephrase the assigned topic" (7). Thus, an accurate model for composing research papers may not differ radically from a model for composing the short, impromptu essays often used for data in writing-process research. Furthermore, discovery prior to composing and discovery during composing need not be mutually exclusive. As Perl states:

Composing always involves some measure of both construction and discovery. Writers construct their discourse inasmuch as they begin with a sense of what they want to write. This sense, as it remains implicit, is not equivalent to the explicit form it gives rise to. Thus, a process of discovering meaning is required. . . . Constructing simultaneously affords discovery. Writers know more fully what they mean only after having written it. (331)

Flower and Hayes make a similar point when they describe planning as a generative act (30).

Even if much research-paper discovery takes place prior to composing, this discovery generally does not take place independent of writing. Stotsky correctly describes the search process as involving "a dynamic interaction between thinking and writing"—underlining, notetaking, jotting down ideas, perhaps outlining ("On Developing" 207).

Reviewing various studies, Hillocks concludes that those studies indicate that most professional writers use some form of informal outline, but that most students examined in early
studies did not (5). As Hillocks notes, however, in early writing-process research, students generally wrote short essays in a limited time, whereas professional writers often produce longer texts with more time for planning (5). In Applebee's study, under 20% of high school students said they wrote outlines prior to composing (77)--but most writing for high-school students involved producing texts of only a few paragraphs (30-32), usually with two days or less from the time of the assignment until the paper was due (55). College students and students completing longer, more time-consuming assignments may be more prone to outline: half of Spivey's 40 college students writing essays summarizing material from sources produced written plans (37), and three of the four community-college students interviewed by Ramig had voluntarily written outlines for their research papers (111).

Revision

Perhaps the most frequently-expressed finding from research about revision is that expert writers revise more thoroughly and are likelier to make large-scale changes than are most weaker writers, a category which is usually defined as including most beginning college students. In probably the best-known study of revision, Nancy Sommers concludes that expert writers were willing to overhaul their essays during revision because they viewed revision as an opportunity for further discovery, whereas students, even at a selective college, generally viewed revision as a matter of correcting
errors and replacing awkward wordings. In Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte's study, macrostructure changes (revisions altering an essay's overall structure) were common in essays by expert adults and advanced student writers, but nonexistent in essays by less-experienced student writers. Moreover, C.K. Stallard found that expert writers not only made almost three times as many revisions as did randomly-selected students, but also spent longer planning their writing and examining what they had written.

In early case studies of student writers, Sharon Pianko found very little revision, and Janet Emig found no revision at all. Emig concludes that "students do not voluntarily revise school-sponsored writing" (93), and Pianko concludes that because of students' lack of commitment to school-sponsored writing, "the composing process is limited" (11). Various authors have noted, however, that the writing situations in Emig's and Pianko's studies bear little resemblance to situations for school-sponsored writing: Emig's and Pianko's students had to write impromptu essays on rather specific topics for no grade or credit while being observed or taped and, for Emig's students, while telling the researcher their thoughts as they wrote. Under the circumstances, it seems possible that the students would lack commitment and would avoid any activity which would prolong the experience, as revising would. In contrast, in L.S. Bridwell's study of the revision practices of twelfth graders
completing an actual school-sponsored assignment and in Ramig's study of community college students' revisions of research papers, students made frequent revisions, although almost exclusively in small-scale matters such as error-correction, word choice, and phrasing.

Just as they do in task definition and library attitudes, teachers apparently play an important role in students' attitudes toward revision. In his study of writing in the secondary schools, Applebee concludes, "For the majority of the students, use of successive drafts for more than minor editorial changes requires help from the teacher . . ." (84). In a study of twelfth graders, Beach found that when teachers wrote comments on students' rough drafts, the students revised more and improved their essays more through revision than did students who had received no comments on their rough drafts ("Effects"). Similarly, Nelson and Hayes present a case study in which a teacher's comments on a student's rough draft convinced that student to make macrostructure changes, thus greatly improving his paper (18-19).

However, English teachers' own attitudes toward revision may not always be what one might expect. In a study of rough drafts, final copies, and comments by 26 preservice English teachers, Beach found that 15 of the 26 did no revision beyond error-correction ("Self-Evaluation").

But although evidence strongly indicates that skilled writers are more willing to make large-scale revisions than
are less skilled writers, visible evidence of revision, like visible evidence of planning, does not necessarily predict quality of the final product. The developmental writers in Perl's study made far more revisions than did the largely gifted students in Emig's study, even though both groups wrote under similar clinical conditions. Also, in Spivey's study of college students summarizing material from sources, the lower-rated essays contained slightly more revisions than the higher-rated ones did (22).

Finally, in examining revision we must be careful not to mistake movement for progress. Some studies of students at various levels, including at least one involving college students (Hansen), have found that revision did not improve students' essays. Moreover, although Faigley and Witte found that advanced students and expert adults revised more extensively than did inexperienced student writers, they concluded that the key to successful revision is not the number of changes, but the extent to which the revisions make the text more congruent with the demands of the writing situation (411-13).

"Alternative" Research Papers

As mentioned already, composition researchers and theorists have written relatively little about the research-paper assignment. When composition researchers or theorists do write about the research paper, however, one claim they almost invariably make is that the research-paper assignment
in its traditional form is a dismal failure in First-Year Composition. Some writers, like North, then suggest that the assignment may be salvaged through relocation in a more advanced composition course dealing with writing for a specific discipline ("Teaching"), while others, like Larson, advocate abolishing the research-paper assignment from composition altogether. Many writers, however, follow their criticism of the traditional research-paper assignment by advocating an alternative form of the assignment, a form which, they claim, will eliminate the drawbacks they have just described in the traditional form.

The best known of these alternative-paper advocates is probably Ken Macrorie, whose *Searching Writing* centers on the "I-Search Paper": an investigation of a question of personal interest to the student, usually involving interviews and other forms of field research in addition to or in place of library research, and written in narrative form, describing the search and its results in chronological order (rather like what Flower calls "writer-based prose"). In criticizing the traditional research-paper assignment, Macrorie sounds almost vitriolic, calling the assignment "a triumph of meaninglessness" (preface) and "ridiculous . . . a great tradition of inanity" (164) and calling most research papers "bad jokes" and "damnfool" (161). In advocating his alternative paper, Macrorie in essence reverses Dinitz and Kiedaisch's "academic community" view, discussed earlier in
this chapter: whereas Dinitz and Kiedaisch describe requiring a student to refocus from "Which personal computer should I buy?" to "Does owning a personal computer improve a student's academic achievement?", Macrorie would tell a student to abandon "Does owning a personal computer improve a student's academic achievement?" and instead write about "Which personal computer should I buy?" Macrorie asserts that I-Search papers allow students to "break themselves of the habit of writing for teacher" (56). He then presents various student I-Search papers--papers which, ironically enough, may be viewed as "writing for teacher" in that they dutifully follow the format he recommends and reenforce his views by criticizing stuffy academic traditions and praising unconventional teachers (72-74).

In Murder, Mischief, and Mayhem: A Process for Creative Research Papers, W. Keith Kraus is far more accepting of traditional research papers, limiting his criticism to asserting that because composition-class research papers are taught not as valuable in themselves but only as preparation for later, more advanced study, they are usually dull and predictable (1, 142). Kraus then describes an alternative that has worked for him: requiring students to investigate old newspapers to research sensationalistic but little-known events such as unsolved murders from the nineteenth century. After being introduced to primary-source research, students recount the historical events in narrative form with
citations, adding their own views in the conclusion.

While Kraus advocates introducing composition students to primary-source library research, Sharon and David Moore advocate introducing students to "mini-reps"--small-scale replications of field-research studies published in professional journals related to the students' majors. The students' papers compare and contrast results of the mini-replications with the results of the published studies. The Moores conclude their article by stating, "... we frequently receive one comment following mini-replications that we rarely received following traditional research papers: 'I'm glad I did that!'" (63)

Glen Spiegelholder advocates a group research paper, with each member of the group responsible for summarizing one source and writing one section of the paper after the group arrives at a thesis and an outline by consensus (13-14). Spiegelholder states that because the group research paper relies on "a humanistic rather than a turgid academic climate" (11), it can "bring the research paper out of the darkness of the primitive initiation rite and into the light of our new understanding of the writing process" (18).

Finally, even Richard Larson, in his essay advocating the abolition of the "generic" research-paper from First-Year Composition, advocates an alternative approach for incorporating research into student writing. Larson states that by presenting the research paper as a separate
assignment, composition teachers imply to students that they do not need to conduct research to complete successfully other college-level writing assignments. Thus, Larson argues, by teaching the research paper as a separate assignment, "we undermine the very goals of our teaching" (815). Larson suggests that rather than teaching "the research paper," composition teachers should expose their students to a variety of writing assignments which encourage them to credit sources they encounter as they engage in many different forms of research (811, 816), including searches into their own experiences and residual knowledge. Larson's argument brings to mind James Moffett's observation that the greatest essayists "cite ideas from books in mixture with ideas and instances drawn from everyday experience, thus fusing life with literature" (131).

Plagiarism

Rather like advertising copywriters claiming that a particular brand of detergent removes stains better, those who advocate an alternative to the traditional research paper tend to claim that their alternative product reduces student plagiarism. Macrorie, for example, after describing the traditional research paper as "often an introduction to the art of plagiarism" (preface), states, "Significantly, few I-Search Papers out of the hundreds I’ve read have plagiarized. The form and approach, the urge, of an I-Searcher is not to look learned by exhibiting other people’s knowledge, but to
answer a need" (247). Kraus, again less hyperbolic than Macrorie, states that his old-murder-cases approach discourages plagiarism because the language in the students' old-newspaper sources is so archaic that plagiarized passages can be easily detected (137). Finally, in arguing that the research paper should be taught not in First-Year Composition but in an upper-level, writing-for-a-discipline course, North argues that plagiarism often results from forcing students to deal with sources while they still "have no depth of knowledge, no existing schema for the subject area in which they are writing" ("Teaching" 18), problems which his approach would presumably eliminate.

Ironically, in the old journal articles written when the research-paper assignment was itself new, it is the research-paper advocates who claim that their innovative assignment, by requiring students to cite sources, reduces plagiarism (Chalfant 45; Ahl 19). The more things change . . . .

Compared to the paucity of writing about the research-paper assignment in general, a relatively large number of articles have been devoted to plagiarism. In the introduction to their bibliography of articles about research-paper instruction, Ford, Rees, and Ward refer to "the many, often repetitive, treatments of plagiarism" (84). Unfortunately, these articles tend to be anecdotal, backed by little research or scholarship. However, Barry Kroll's "How College Freshmen View Plagiarism" is an exception. Using survey data, Kroll
concludes that the vast majority of students consider plagiarism to be wrong and feel that plagiarists should be punished (219). He notes, however, "how infrequently certain moral principles--such as truthfulness, fidelity, and trust--occurred in the students' explanations," and suggests that teachers' best resource in reducing plagiarism might be "to encourage [students] to explore new lines of moral reasoning, broadening and deepening their understanding of why it is wrong to plagiarize" (220).

Others argue that the process approach decreases student plagiarism, either because students who experience the effort that goes into a piece of writing will treat others' writing with more respect (Carroll 93) or because students will not cheat when they see that their teacher is concerned about and involved with their writing (Connell 24-25). Still others suggest making highly specific assignments so that students cannot find anything appropriate in a term-paper file (Connell 21).

Students quoted in this literature sometimes attempt to justify plagiarism by describing it as a response to impossible demands from teachers (Carroll 93; Connell 26). However, given that a recent survey of 204,000 first-year college students found that almost half of them spent no more than five hours per week studying for all their classes combined (Weinberger 35), it seems possible that some students may define "impossible demands" rather loosely. Other
observers argue that the increasing presence of underprepared college students, unable or unwilling to complete assignments satisfactorily, combined with grade inflation which makes a "gentleman's C" unacceptable, leads to rampant plagiarism (Connell 20, 24-25). Also, students and administrators alike echo Haskell's study and Becker, Geer and Hughes's *Making the Grade* in arguing that students increasingly value solely the grade, not the idea of learning, an outlook which combines with an ends-justify-the-means philosophy to make plagiarism inevitable (Connell 26-28).

While purchased term papers and other forms of intentional plagiarism make for rather sensational copy, others such as Dorothy Brown argue that most student plagiarism is unintentional (206-07). In Spivey's study, six of the 40 college juniors and seniors produced texts consisting of nothing but word-for-word copying from the sources Spivey had provided, even though they had been asked to write an essay in their own words (7). It seems probable that students like these six college juniors and seniors do not understand the concept of paraphrasing and that they unintentionally plagiarize whenever asked to write a research paper. Indeed, the results discussed later in this dissertation suggest that unintentional plagiarism is far more widespread than most teachers would care to admit and that some plagiarism is best described as "semi-intentional."
Broader Theory

Besides works related specifically to the writing process or the research paper, the ideas of more general theorists may also enrich this study. One such theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, is discussed in detail in Chapter One and cited frequently throughout the study. Another broader theorist whose ideas may be applied to students' approaches to the research-paper assignment is psychologist William Perry. Perry portrays students' intellectual and ethical development as emerging from a series of crises as the students painfully give up belief in an absolutist black-and-white world view and move varying degrees toward the more sophisticated, albeit less soothing, recognition of the need to make commitments in a world full of grey areas, a world where all knowledge is grounded in context. Perry classifies students' viewpoints into nine positions, from unthinking acceptance of authority (position 1) to recognizing uncertainty and viewing it as a justification for lack of commitment (position 5) to accepting commitment and responsibility despite recognizing the limits of certainty (position 9). Most of Perry's subjects--students at the admittedly atypical Harvard and Radcliffe--were in positions three, four, or five at the end of their first year in college, and in positions six, seven, or eight as seniors (55-56).

Perry ideas provide a new perspective on task definition. Viewed in light of Perry's work, the previously-mentioned
tendency of students to try to avoid risk and ambiguity in school-sponsored assignments becomes more understandable than ever. The students are not simply trying to avoid work; they are also trying to preserve their world view, a view in which they expect authorities to tell them what to do, a view threatened by assignments requiring them to think for themselves. Thus, the need to "sustain ambiguity" stressed by Kuhlthau and others, already described as difficult for students to accept, becomes even more difficult. The decision to adopt a rhetorical reading strategy, already described as risky by Flower because such a decision narrows the range of appropriate source material and because the teacher may not approve of the student's viewpoint, becomes even more risky when considered in terms of Perry's work. After all, adopting a rhetorical stance toward one's sources involves questioning those sources, thus again threatening the world views of those who still accept authority unquestioningly. Finally, Perry's work suggests another reason that the students Schwegler and Shamoone interviewed tended to define research papers as informational reports written for a teacher-as-examiner: if one assumes that Authority possesses Truth, one will naturally define the research-paper assignment as a command to read some Authorities, paraphrase some nuggets of authoritative Truth, and hand in those nuggets to another Authority--the teacher. Perry's work, in short, reminds us of how high the stakes are for students when we encourage them to define the research
paper task more ambitiously.

Perry's work may influence our view not only of students, but of teachers as well. Perry states that in order to move to more sophisticated intellectual and ethical positions, a student needs a "sense of community." Teachers may help by confirming the student in his community with them—a membership he achieves (at the very least as an apprentice or colleague-to-be) through his own making of meaning, his daring to take risks, and his courage in committing himself. (213)

Perry adds that college teachers generally have not succeeded in developing a sense of teacher-student community. As an example of the problem, he notes that it is rare for a student to get the sense that "his paper has been read with primary attention to his meaning, and only secondary attention to establishing a grade" (213).

Although Perry writes as a psychologist in the 1960's, the above quotations in every way--except the use of the generic "he"--sound like the work of a contemporary composition theorist. Perry's reference to the student as a potential apprentice foreshadows Schwegler and Shamon's interviews with professors who view the research paper as part of an "apprenticeship"; his observation about grading foreshadows various recent articles by composition specialists exploring ways teachers' approaches to student texts differ from their approaches to their colleagues' texts; his references to risk-taking and the courage needed for commitment foreshadow the Carnegie-Mellon group's work with
rhetorical reading and writing; and his reference to meaning-making anticipates what has become a virtual shibboleth among composition specialists. But more important than any specific references, Perry's work as a whole helps us view students' composition problems in terms of human development.

Others have elaborated on Perry's view that students' intellectual and ethical maturity, and hence their full individuality, may emerge only through a sense of community. In a statement strikingly like Perry's point that teachers' readings of student papers have not encouraged students to feel a sense of community, Patricia Bizzell argues that one reason "real-world" writers have less difficulty than students in finding something to say is that "real-world writers are writing for discourse communities in which they know that their work can matter" (232).

At first glance, this discourse-community approach seems conservative, a way of teaching students to go along with the group and conform. For example, Kenneth Bruffee states that from the discourse-community perspective, one assumes that people write not "to persuade or to distinguish themselves and their points of view and to enhance their individuality by gaining the acquiescence of other individuals," but rather "to be accepted, to join, to be regarded as another member of the culture or community that constitutes the writer's audience" (652). Such a view at times seems to ally Bruffee and Bizzell with traditional composition textbooks, books which, as
Stephen North has observed, tend to "present writing as a matter of learning to conform," and to oppose Bruffee and Bizzell to more nontraditional thinkers whose textbooks tend to present writing as "a means of defining individual as separate from group" (Making 31).

At a deeper level, however, no contradiction need exist between writing as conformity and writing as individuality. Like jazz musicians who can improvise freely only after mastering the demands of music theory or athletes who can play with abandon because the game has rules, writers can express themselves fully only when they understand the nuances of communicating with their chosen audience. Thus, learning to write within the boundaries of a particular discourse community can be a liberating experience—as long as the discourse community is one that the writer truly wishes to join.

A discourse-community emphasis may become rigidly conservative, however, when students are forced to conform to the standards of communities they have no desire to join or, especially, when a teacher refuses to acknowledge the validity of other perspectives besides those stemming from one particular discourse community. To Bizzell, "The exercise of cultural hegemony can be seen in the treatment of one community's discourse conventions as if they simply mirrored reality" (238)—an observation that adds political overtones to Perry's statement that most students in his study arrived
in college largely believing that Truth comes from Authorities. To Bizzell, one strength of discourse analysis is that it encourages students to confront "the 'hidden curriculum': the project of initiating students into a particular world view that gives rise to the daily classroom tasks without being consciously examined by teacher or students" (237-38). Bruffee’s and Bizzell’s ideas enrich this study by emphasizing the communities student writers are implicitly being encouraged to join.

Paolo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed goes much further with the "hidden curriculum" concept. Examining the potential of education for altering what he considers an oppressive society, Freire notes that the oppressed often possess a "fear of freedom" because freedom entails "autonomy and responsibility" (31). Freire argues that traditional teacher-dominated classes--what he calls the "banking method" of education, because the students act as passive receptacles into which the teacher "deposits" facts--perpetuate oppression both by mirroring a hierarchical society and by discouraging students from independent thought. In place of the "banking method," Freire advocates a dialogic form of education in which the teacher poses relevant problems and the students and the teacher cooperatively seek solutions to those problems, with the teacher learning along with the students as a partner rather than imposing his or her own view as the ideal solution. While many of the more narrowly-focused works
discussed earlier in this chapter explore ways teachers may encourage independent thought, Freire reminds us that many teachers routinely discourage such thought. Freire's work also focuses attention on the political overtones of individual classrooms, including the classrooms examined in this study.

Another group whose ideas enrich our view of research papers are those concerned with reader-response theory. Granted, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, David Bleich, and other reader-response theorists have concerned themselves primarily with ways readers respond to fiction, poetry, and drama, not essays. Nevertheless, their emphasis on reading as a meaning-constructing act and on readers as co-constructors of a text has profound implications for the research paper. By placing the reader in the foreground of meaning-making, reader-response theory implicitly emphasizes the student's power to transform sources to serve his or her ends—the student's "unifying voice," in Bakhtin's terms—rather than allowing the sources to control the research paper's message.

Finally, at the risk of stating the obvious, this study benefits from the thinking of ethnographers such as Clifford Geertz and others who have examined ways groups influence behavior; the thinking of case-study researchers such as Jean Piaget and others who have carefully examined individuals in order to study the learning process; and the thinking of Shirley Brice Heath, Donald Graves, and other researchers who
have applied qualitative-research principles to the study of writing. This dissertation is just one of many recent studies in the composition community that build on the work of these qualitative researchers.

Yet despite the composition community's recent explosion of qualitative studies, only a few studies--those of Nelson and Hayes, Haskell, and Kuhlthau--have qualitatively examined more than one or two students working on research papers. Moreover, despite the strengths of these few studies, they all leave much to be desired. Nelson and Hayes describe their study as "Naturalistic Observations of Students Writing Research Papers," but the study is apparently based solely on examination of eight paid students' "process logs," journals in which the students wrote daily entries regarding their work on research papers assigned in classes (7). Similarly, although Haskell claims that her study "yielded much rich, descriptive data" of 39 high-school students as they completed research papers (10-11), the data turns out to be based on a single 30-to-45-minute interview with each student, a single interview with each teacher, copies of lesson plans and handouts, and a list of the grades the students received on their research papers. Moreover, the interviews took place after the papers had been completed, turned in, graded, and returned to the students--three to five months after the assignments were given and the students began the research which they attempted to recall during the interviews.
Kuhlthau's study seems more thorough. In addition to examining process logs from 24 of the 27 students involved in her study, she interviewed six case-study students six times apiece at various intervals throughout their research processes, and as a librarian at the high school where the study took place, she was able to observe first-hand at least some of the library-research behaviors of her students. Unfortunately, Kuhlthau restricts herself to the students' search processes, not dealing with the actual writing of the research papers. Moreover, the students Kuhlthau describes come from highly atypical backgrounds. One high school student chose to write about "negative Utopias" after reading *A Clockwork Orange*, while another chose to write about Kafka after reading some of Kafka's works, in both cases without the works having been required reading for class (204). Another student gave as her reason for writing about Lillian Hellman, "When I was sick I read a lot of Lillian Hellman's plays" (204), while still another chose to write about Eugene Ionesco after reading a collection of Ionesco plays he found in his mother's bookcase (375). For those of us not teaching in highly selective institutions, such students seem an exotic breed, almost an alien species.

In fact, the few existing studies of students' research-paper processes all involve predominately high-achieving students: all of Kuhlthau's students and most of Haskell's were in twelfth-grade honors classes, Nelson and Hayes along
with their colleagues understandably deal with students at the selective Carnegie-Mellon, and Ramig's study of revision examines thirty research papers selected by instructors as the six best in five community-college composition classes. Composition studies would benefit from qualitative studies of students at a wide range of ability levels as they complete research-paper assignments, especially if the new studies' data-collection strategies were more comprehensive than those employed in most previous studies.

In summary, then, the study described in the remaining chapters derives much from a wide range of previous work: information from studies of students' writing processes and reading processes, insights from a number of more general theorists, and a sense of purpose from the strengths and limitations of previous studies of students' work on research-paper assignments.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter describes (1) the purpose of the study, (2) the goals behind the sampling procedures, (3) the sampling procedures themselves, (4) the sample, (5) data-collection procedures, and (6) reporting procedures.

Purpose of the Study

The study was designed to determine what college undergraduates do from the time they receive a research-paper assignment until they hand in the finished paper, and why they do it. It was hoped that by describing actual conditions, the study could shed light on how those conditions could be improved. Thus, the study was also designed to consider under what circumstances, if at all, college teachers should require research papers of undergraduates.

Goals Behind Sampling Procedures

One cannot capture the full range of undergraduates’ research-paper experiences within a single qualitative study. Nevertheless, this study was designed to examine a large (by the standards of qualitative research) sample in a wide variety of ways. The study involved classroom and library observation, document collection and analysis, and over a hundred individual interviews with members of a sample which
included twenty-four students and eight teachers. But to maximize the chances that the data from the study might have larger significance, the sample had to be not only large, but also diverse.

**Students**

First, diversity was sought in the students themselves:

--- in gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background;

--- in parents' educational levels, and thus, presumably, in the education-related messages the students received in the home while growing up;

--- in academic major and in class, from first-year student to senior;

--- in age, from the traditional student who enrolls as a full-time college student in the summer or fall after graduating from high school to the older student who returns to school after years or even decades;

--- in ability level as measured by grade-point averages and standardized test scores.

**Classes**

Diversity was also sought in terms of the classes for which the students were completing research papers. Because most composition programs provide research-paper instruction, students were sought from each major level of composition: Basic Writing, First-Year Composition, and Advanced Composition. However, Richard Larson and others have argued that because most research and research-based writing is discipline-specific, the instruction in writing "generic" research papers provided in most First-Year Composition classes has little carry-over value. Thus, so that the study could test Larson's views, students were also sought who were
writing research papers for courses in disciplines other than English, particularly if those students, in contrast to most composition students, were writing papers for courses in their academic majors. In addition, to examine the possible influence of what Edward White calls the "campus climate for writing" (1), students were sought in classes at two contrasting institutions, an open-door community college and a somewhat selective state university.

Diversity was also sought in instructional methods, so that the sample would include classes taught primarily by what Paulo Freire calls "the banking method," that is, by lecture and by teacher-led discussion; classes featuring collaborative work among students or workshop conditions; and classes taught by independent-study tutorials.

The Research-Paper Assignment

Diversity was also sought in the research-paper assignments themselves, as well as in the teachers' approaches to those assignments:

--papers based exclusively on library research and papers involving other types of research such as laboratory experiments or personal interviews.

--relatively short papers requiring only a few sources and longer papers requiring more sources, so that the study could examine Ford, Rees, and Ward's assertion that the longer, more structurally complex research paper "requires different competencies" from the student than does the shorter, simpler paper (51-52);

--papers the students were expected to work on gradually over a long period and papers the students were expected to work on intensively during a relatively brief period, so that the study could consider the question of whether the research paper can be taught in
composition classes without research-paper instruction constituting roughly 35 percent of the course, as was the average in the most recent survey figures available (Ford and Perry 828);

--papers for classes in which substantial time is devoted to research-paper instruction and papers for classes in which the teacher provides no research-paper instruction beyond specifying items such as range of acceptable topics, minimum length and number of sources, citation format, and due date.

Sampling Methods

Course and Assignment Selection

Rather than beginning by seeking particular students or particular teachers for my sample, I began by using the already-mentioned criteria to choose a particular course in which to observe students or a particular assignment on which to observe students’ writing processes. If the course was being offered at a time when I would be able to observe class sessions, I contacted the teacher, described my study, and asked for the teacher’s cooperation. No teacher declined to take part, although one history teacher, discussed near the beginning of Chapter Seven, was sufficiently uncooperative that I had little choice but to drop his class from my sample.

Teacher Selection

At times, teacher selection reflected my desire for a diverse sample, one that would fairly represent contrasting teaching styles. For instance, Dr. Norton (Chapter Five) was selected because I knew her to be an experienced professor who had received various honors during her career and who was self-confident and decisive enough that my presence in her
classroom would not cause her to alter her largely traditionalist methods, while Ms. Kramer was selected because the University's Director of Composition had recommended her as an exemplary non-traditionalist teacher.

In other cases, however, a teacher's selection reflected mainly the teacher's availability and willingness, along with the fact that the course or the assignment satisfied criteria I sought. When I sought to observe University students as they completed senior theses, preferably in science, another University professor recommended that I contact Dr. Carter (Chapter Eight), who frequently chaired senior thesis committees in chemistry. He agreed to take part in the study, as did two students whose senior thesis committees he chaired. Ms. Gibson (Chapter Four) was the only person teaching Basic Writing at a time when I could observe the class and during the semester in which I wished to work with Basic Writing students. When only one of Dr. Norton's First-Year-Composition students volunteered to take part in my study and I was in danger of gaining little data during the semester, Ms. Logan (Chapter Five) agreed to encourage her First-Year-Composition students to take part. Similarly, when the previously-mentioned history teacher's class did not work out and I was again in danger of making little progress during a semester, the University's Director of Composition suggested that I contact Ms. Harris (Chapter Seven), who agreed to take part in my study.
Finally, certain teachers more or less followed their students into the sample. When two First-Year-Composition students in my sample told me that they were also writing research papers for a sociology class that semester, I contacted the sociology teacher, Dr. McDaniel (Chapter Five), and he agreed to take part in my study. When, during a conversation following a chance meeting, a former student of mine suggested that I study his processes of completing his senior thesis in history, I contacted his thesis advisor, Dr. Montgomery (Chapter Eight), who agreed to be interviewed for the study.

I already knew four of the teachers prior to their participation in the study, while I met the other four only as a result of the study. As far as I could determine, our prior personal acquaintance or lack of acquaintance had no effect on the teachers' contributions to the study.

Selection of Students

Other than the students writing senior theses, whose selection process has already been briefly described, the students in the sample were recruited in a fairly uniform fashion. After obtaining permission from the classroom teacher, I would go to the class, briefly describe my study, and ask interested students to write their names and telephone numbers on a sheet which was being passed around. In every case other than the already-mentioned history teacher and the senior thesis advisors, the teacher then offered class members
extra credit for participating in the study—five points (on a 0-100 scale) on the research paper, for example, or exemption from having to write a certain number of journal entries. In most cases, I then simply worked with any students who volunteered. Given the diversity of courses selected, from Basic Writing at the open-door community college to senior-thesis courses required only of honors students at the somewhat selective University, it was assumed that a diverse sample of students would for the most part result naturally.

Besides the already-described methods of selecting senior-thesis students, there were two other exceptions to the "natural selection" procedure. In one case, because the first two students who volunteered to participate in the sample were both exceptionally competent students with unusually favorable attitudes toward writing and research, the next group of students approached (Ms. Logan’s students, discussed in Chapter Five) were told that although I welcomed all volunteers, I especially welcomed those who didn’t particularly like English or research papers and who tended to procrastinate a bit on writing assignments. Thus, the four students I worked with from Ms. Logan’s class are by themselves a biased sample; nevertheless, within the study as a whole they may be helpful as an antidote to a slight bias in the opposite direction, as will be discussed later in this chapter.
In the only other exception to the "natural selection" procedure, when I described my study to Ms. Kramer's class (discussed in Chapter Six), eighteen of the twenty-four students present at the time volunteered to take part, whereas no other class in my sample produced more than six volunteers. (Ms. Kramer's teaching style and her class members' personalities had combined to create an unusually enthusiastic group; moreover, Ms. Kramer offered more extra credit for taking part in the study than did any of the other teachers.) Both to avoid overrepresentation from a particular classroom and to work effectively within my own limited research time, I could not accept every volunteer. I consulted Ms. Kramer, and she suggested which students would best serve as a cross-section of the class. However, the class was on a tight schedule, and many of the students were difficult to reach by telephone. Thus, the six students from this class that I finally worked with were selected as much by being at home when the phone rang as by being high on the list Ms. Kramer had compiled. Even so, after the semester had ended, Ms. Kramer described the six I worked with as a better cross-section than the six she had originally recommended.

Further information about sample selection may be found in Chapters Four through Eight. Near the beginning of each of these chapters, the selection processes for the teacher and students discussed in that chapter are briefly described.
The Sample

The tables on pages 92 and 93 describe individuals in the sample in some detail. The following paragraphs will complement individual information in the tables by discussing the sample as a whole.

Overall, the sample does provide the diversity which was sought. As already mentioned, the sample consists of twenty-four students and eight teachers. (On casual examination, the tables seem to list twenty-six students because two of the students, Jacki and Greg, were writing papers for two teachers in the sample, and are, therefore, listed twice.) The courses for which the students were writing their research papers included Basic Writing, First-Year Composition (including a class in which literary topics were required, as well as two classes in which general topics were acceptable), and Advanced Composition, as well as courses in sociology, history, and chemistry.

Eleven of the students attended the open-door community college, while thirteen attended the University. The eight teachers were evenly divided, four from the community college and four from the University.

The students' backgrounds vary widely. Of the twenty-four students, fifteen were male and nine female; three were black, one Asian-American, and twenty white; twelve were traditional in the sense of enrolling as full-time college students in the summer or fall after graduation from high
### Table 1: Summary of Sample - Community College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Father's Educ.</th>
<th>Mother's Educ.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher: Ms. Gibson</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course: Basic Writing&lt;br&gt;Assign.: 7-paragraph cause/effect paper, citing at least 3 magazine articles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Bus. Ad.</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>nutrition</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>child abuse</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>computers in workplace</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Respiratory Therapy</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>media &amp; politics</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Business (finance)</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>steroids</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Bus. Ad.</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td></td>
<td>legalization of drugs</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher: Dr. Norton</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course: 2nd Semester of 1st-Yr. Composition&lt;br&gt;Assign.: 1,000-2,000 word general-topics paper, citing at least 3 sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacki</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Sec. Educ. (math.)</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>CPC's &amp; the environ.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher: Dr. McDaniel</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course: Sociology (Social Problems)&lt;br&gt;Assign.: 5-page paper on a social issue, citing at least 4 sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>gang violence</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacki</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Sec. Educ. (math.)</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>CPC's &amp; the environ.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher: Ms. Logan</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course: 2nd Semester of 1st-Yr. Composition&lt;br&gt;Assign.: 1,500-word paper on a literary topic, citing 4-6 sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>Shakespeare's Iago</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>The Beatles' lyrics</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1 yr. college</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
<td>Hemingway &amp; women</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>V. Hugo &amp; Les Misérables</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All names of teachers, students, and librarians in this study are pseudonyms.*

'This table is based on the RSEQUDEPER study. All names of teachers, students, and librarians in this study are pseudonyms.'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Father's Educ.</th>
<th>Mother's Educ.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Mech./Thermal</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>John F. Kennedy</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Sec. Educ. (biology)</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
<td>Arthur Miller</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Salem Witch Trials</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velma</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>Carlos Romulo</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Vietnam protests at U of Wisconsin</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Accounting/Finance</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>shamanism</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>building birdhouses</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>So.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Bus. Mktg.</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>TV's effects on the family</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>esterifications of a quinine derivative</td>
<td>highest honors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijay</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>evolution of citric acid cycle</td>
<td>highest honors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>1917 garment workers' strike</td>
<td>honors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All names of teachers, students, and librarians in this study are pseudonyms.
school and continuing to attend school regularly, and twelve were nontraditional, ranging from students in their early twenties who had delayed a year or so between high school and college to students in their forties returning to school after decades. In terms of the parents’ educational background, the sample ranged widely, with five students reporting that neither parent had advanced beyond eighth grade and six students reporting that both parents had earned at least a bachelor’s degree.

The teachers also came from varied circumstances. Of the eight teachers, four were male and four female; one was black, seven white; four had doctorates, while four did not. The teachers’ institutional status ranged from part-time instructor to full professor in an endowed position. Their ages ranged from the mid-thirties to the upper fifties.

The students’ class levels and academic interests show diversity as well. Because the study focuses heavily on Basic Writing and First-Year-Composition courses, fourteen of the twenty-four students were first-year college students. (For convenience, these students’ class level is abbreviated as "Fr." in the table, despite the implicit sexism of the term "freshman.") However, the sample also included one sophomore, three juniors, and six seniors. Although the sample leaned rather heavily toward business majors, others in the sample were majoring in the laboratory sciences, the humanities, engineering, nursing, education, broadcasting, computer
science, and the health sciences. Although history and the social sciences are absent from the students’ list of majors, the student discussed in more detail than any other in this study (David, Chapter Eight) was an interdisciplinary Humanities major who was completing a senior thesis in history and whose approach was strongly influenced by leftist economic theories.

Finally, the sample was diverse in terms of the students’ academic records. At one extreme, one of the Basic Writers eventually dropped out of the community college after completing only a single college-level course and receiving a D in that course. At the other, one of the students completing a senior thesis was about to earn his bachelor’s degree with a 3.97 GPA (rounded to 4.0 in Table 2) and had been accepted into medical school at a nationally prestigious university. Both the median and the mean GPA for students in the sample were between 2.8 and 2.9, perhaps slightly higher than the national average (especially for a sample weighted so heavily toward first-year college students), but close enough to the average to suggest that this is a reasonably representative group.

Although standardized test scores were available only from slightly fewer than half the members of the sample, those scores revealed a pattern similar to that from the students’ GPA’s. One of the Basic Writing students had earned a 280 on the verbal portion of his SAT, while at the other extreme the
only senior-thesis student for whom scores were available (David) had earned a 34 on the English portion of his ACT. While the incomplete data and the difficulty of comparing ACT scores to SAT scores preclude the reporting of medians and means, the students' scores seemed to average near or slightly above the fiftieth percentile nationwide.

However, the grades the students received for their research papers, as listed in the tables on pages 92 and 93, seem remarkably high as a group, a finding which may undermine somewhat any claim that the sample is reasonably representative of undergraduates as a whole. Conceivably, these grades may be evidence of the Hawthorne effect: the students may have worked harder on their papers because they knew that they were part of a study, or the teachers may have graded the papers somewhat differently than they would have had they not been involved in the study, or both. However, other than the three students writing senior theses, none of the students in the sample felt that being part of the study had affected their approaches to the assignments, and the only teacher to report that her involvement in the study had created even a slight self-consciousness regarding evaluating the essays was Ms. Harris, the Advanced Composition teacher described in Chapter Seven. A more likely explanation is that Ms. Gibson (Basic Writing, Chapter Four) and Ms. Kramer (First-Year Composition, Chapter Six), who are only two of the sample's eight teachers but who graded papers from half of the
sample's twenty-four students, are by nature relatively lenient graders. Since other chapters of this dissertation include excerpts from all student papers, as well as a discussion of the teachers' written comments and grades for those papers, readers may to some degree judge for themselves the relationship between the quality of the papers and the grades the papers received, as well as judging the extent to which the students' work reflects the competency levels of undergraduates nationwide.

Members of the sample are described in more detail at the beginnings of the chapters in which their research-paper work is discussed.

**Data-Collection Procedures**

Qualitative researchers often attempt to collect data from as many sources and perspectives as possible, with data from each source testing the accuracy of data from other sources. This strategy, often called "triangulation," has been described as qualitative researchers' closest approximation to quantitative researchers' tests for reliability and validity of data (North, Making 307-08; Kantor 80; Diesing 3; Calkins 130-31; Kantor, Kirby, and Goetz 303; LeCompte and Goetz 11). Therefore, this study was designed to elicit many kinds of data, through three main procedures: interviews, observation, and document analysis.
Interviews

At the heart of this study are 110 individual interviews with students, teachers, and librarians. The twenty-four students in the sample were interviewed anywhere from one to seven times, with roughly 80% of the interviews audiotaped and transcribed and the remainder reconstructed from notes. The median number of interviews per student was three and the mean was 3.8. In almost all cases, the first interview with a student took place within a few days of the teacher’s giving the assignment, and the final interview took place a day or two after the teacher had returned the final copy of the paper, graded. The interviews ranged in length from under five minutes to about two hours, averaging about thirty minutes. Certain questions, mainly eliciting the kinds of statistical data which appear in the tables, were asked of all or nearly all students. However, most interviews consisted largely of more impromptu conversations in which the students discussed such matters as their reasons for choosing their paper topics; their methods and progress in working on the assignment thus far; their plans for upcoming work on the assignment; their usual researching and writing processes; their attitudes toward education, writing, and research papers; and in the final interview, their overall feelings about the assignment, the completed paper, and the grade and comments their paper received.
In addition, each teacher was interviewed after that teacher had graded and returned the papers. Three of the teachers were also interviewed shortly after they assigned the research paper. Interviews with teachers focused on their approaches to assigning and teaching the research paper and on their perceptions of their students within the sample, those students’ processes of completing the papers, and the papers themselves. These interviews ranged in length from about ten minutes to about two hours, with the average at about forty minutes.

Five reference librarians, four from the community college and one from the University, were also interviewed once apiece. These interviews dealt mainly with the library practices of undergraduates, especially those who were working on research papers. In some cases, the librarian being interviewed knew one or more of the students from the sample and discussed those particular students’ library practices. The interviews with librarians ranged from forty to ninety minutes, averaging about one hour per interview.

Finally, three other students were interviewed once or twice apiece before withdrawing from the study. Although these students are not regarded as part of the sample, quotations from their interviews occasionally appear in the dissertation, always in Chapter Five. Whenever these students are quoted, they are clearly identified as students who withdrew from the study, not members of the sample.
Of the 110 interviews conducted as part of this study, 86 were audiotaped and then transcribed. Twenty-two were not audiotaped, occasionally because of equipment problems (dead batteries, for instance), but more often because of convenience, as when a student from the sample dropped by my office without advance notice at a time when I was without my tape recorder or when a student consented to be interviewed as he or she hurried through the library looking for sources. In those twenty-two cases, I took notes during the interview and transcribed those notes into a reconstructed conversation as soon as possible after the interview, usually within a few days. Two interviews were partly taped and transcribed and partly reconstructed from notes.

**Observation**

Of the eight teachers in the sample, I observed four teaching the classes which contained students in the sample, taking notes on ways the teachers approached the research paper and the writing process, as well as on ways students in the sample used class time. In three of these classes, I was able to observe most or all class sessions devoted to the research paper. Of the remaining four teachers in the sample, I was able to observe one, Ms. Logan, teaching the research paper to another class. (Ms. Logan’s class from which I drew students for my sample conflicted with my own work schedule.) Another, Dr. McDaniel, stated that he provided no research-paper instruction beyond specifying the paper’s length, number
of sources, format, and due date, a statement which his students from my sample confirmed. Thus, there seemed to be no need to observe his classes. The remaining two teachers, Dr. Carter and Dr. Montgomery, were not involved in the study as classroom teachers but rather as advisors for students' senior theses, so that in their cases there was no classroom instruction to be observed.

I also observed and took notes during:

--individual conferences that nine of the students had with their teachers.

--eight occasions on which one or more of the students in my sample sought sources in the library. On five of these occasions, I walked with the student from place to place in the library, and the student described his or her thoughts to me as he or she worked. All totalled, I observed nine students from the sample working in the library at least once.

--four occasions on which a student read sources and described his or her thoughts to me. In one of these cases, I audiotaped and later transcribed the comments a student made as he read and took notes on nineteen newspaper articles during a reading session of roughly 2 1/2 hours.

--a student’s oral defense of his senior thesis.

--library orientation sessions in two classes from the sample.

Document Collection

Another source of data was the analysis of documents related to the students' research papers. Twenty-one of the twenty-four students provided copies of the final drafts of their research papers, including the teachers' written grades and comments. One of the remaining three did not complete his research paper, thus receiving a zero on the assignment.
Reasons for the unavailability of the other two papers are discussed in Chapters Four and Seven.

Sixteen of the twenty-three students who completed research papers also provided rough drafts of their papers. (The student who did not complete the paper also did not complete a rough draft.) Most of these sixteen students provided several different rough drafts. Rough drafts from eight of the students included the teachers' written suggestions for revision; two students also provided their classmates' suggestions for revisions after peer-editing sessions.

Ten of the students provided their notes, usually on notebook paper, occasionally on note cards. Seven also provided outlines, three provided papers handed in for a grade earlier in the semester in the course for which they were writing their research papers, and two provided research papers they had written for other classes during a previous semester.

The teachers and librarians also provided handouts used in teaching the research-paper assignment, including explanations of the assignment, lists of suggested topics, syllabi for individual sections of a course, the departmental course syllabus, paraphrasing and summarizing exercises, warnings about plagiarism, library exercises, and a departmental grading sheet with standardized point deductions for various errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
Triangulation

This variety in sources of data proved helpful in at least three ways. First, one type of information sometimes compensated for deficiencies in another type of information. For example, three of the twenty-four students had such tight schedules that they could be interviewed only once each. However, I was able to observe two of the three as they looked for sources in the library and as they conferred individually with their teacher. Through observing, I gained much of the information I ordinarily would have sought through further interviews. Similarly, in the one case in which I was unable to attend any of the teacher’s class sessions devoted to research-paper instruction, the students from the sample were all interviewed much more often than most other students in the sample were, so that I was able to glean from interviews much of the information I would otherwise have gained from observation.

Second, the variety in sources often allowed for triangulation, as I tested the information from one source by comparing it with information from another. For example, during their initial interviews, students were routinely asked their grade-point averages. In the cases of about half of the students, I was able to check the students’ replies against the schools’ official records. The comparison revealed that (1) most students’ self-reported GPA’s were precisely accurate, and (2) in those few cases in which there was a
discrepancy, the student’s self-reported GPA was never off by more than one-tenth of a letter grade, with the students reporting their GPA’s slightly too low as often as they reported them slightly too high.

Third, because the various sources of data generally complemented one another, the study could portray students and their academic situations in greater depth. For example, an Advanced Composition student known in the study as Zachary (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven) repeatedly stated during interviews that he had little desire to be in college, being more interested in a fledgling rock band in which he played guitar. When his class was observed, Zachary was frequently absent, and if present, paid little attention to the teacher, did not know about reading assignments or paper deadlines, and occasionally engaged in mildly disruptive behavior such as starting to whistle at a time when the class had grown quiet. Both her behavior toward Zachary in class and her statements when interviewed revealed that although Zachary’s teacher found Zachary likeable as a person, she found him exasperating as a student. Examination of Zachary’s rough draft (which was turned in late) reveals that the teacher wrote a lengthy response to that rough draft, warning Zachary that he needed to narrow his topic greatly and to try to make the essay fit the assignment. Zachary’s research notes were not available for examination, not because he refused to provide them but because he simply did not take any
notes. All of these bits of information support one another; and all of them help to explain why examination of Zachary’s final draft reveals that he produced a weak research paper and that the teacher responded by giving that paper an F.

Sources of data for any particular group of students within the sample are briefly described near the beginning of the chapter which focuses on that group of students.

**Reporting Procedures**

Because this study relies heavily on quotations from the interviews, a brief explanation of the relationship between sample members’ spoken words and the printed quotations may be helpful.

**Quoting Non-Standard English**

In general, the quotations from interviews are exactly what quotations should be: people’s actual words. This means that if a student (or, occasionally, a teacher) used non-Standard English while expressing a point which seemed significant enough to quote, then the non-Standard English is preserved in the quotation. The study does not attempt to preserve regional or somewhat informal pronunciations of the "Ah cain’t do nothin’" variety. But if a student had said "Ah cain’t do nothin’" in a passage significant enough to quote, then that sentence would have been quoted as "I can’t do nothing," not "I can’t do anything." Except for a case or two in which the non-standard usage seems highly uncharacteristic of the speaker or otherwise remarkable, these quotations are
presented without "[sic]" to mark the non-standard usages. (Similarly, when the study quotes excerpts from students' rough drafts or final copies, errors are preserved, and "[sic]" is not used except in a few cases in which the error seems highly surprising.)

The non-standard usages were not distributed evenly throughout the sample. The reader will encounter non-Standard English frequently in quotations from most of the Basic Writers and from some of the First-Year-Composition students, but almost never among quotations from the First-Year-Composition students with the highest GPA's, the Advanced Composition students, or the honors students who were writing senior theses. In addition, all five librarians and seven of the eight teachers also used Standard English almost exclusively. In noting patterns of language use and in preserving some of those patterns in the study's quotations, I do not mean to denigrate those who do not routinely speak in Standard English, nor do I mean to suggest that Standard English is a sign of intelligence, as measured by academic success. Rather, I have chosen to preserve these patterns of language use for two reasons. First, because this study documents real people's ways of handling assignments in actual classes, the quotations must convey a sense of verisimilitude. Second, by presenting something like the students' actual voices, the quotations emphasize one of the major points of this study: that non-traditional students must overcome
formidable obstacles in order to enter the conversation of the academy. Even a traditional student must become comfortable with new vocabularies, genre conventions, research methods, and ways of thinking in order to enter the written conversation of a specific academic discipline; but the nontraditional student must acquire a new linguistic register simply to write an acceptable 500-word theme in First-Year Composition. Moreover, as discussed elsewhere in this study, the nontraditional student often must also overcome an upbringing in which supportive messages regarding education were virtually nonexistent at home, a secondary education in which little or no writing was taught or required, and disheartening conditions in the college classes in which the student is expected to learn to write. Reproducing students' habitual language patterns is one more way of emphasizing the difficulties certain students faced in college.

From Tape or Notes to Text

Although the quotations generally reproduce the speakers' exact words, I have at times taken certain liberties with those words. As anyone who has worked with speech transcriptions knows, spoken discourse, even in a structured situation such as an interview, tends to be far more disorganized and meandering than is written discourse. Frequently, a person being interviewed would begin to express an important idea, become sidetracked temporarily, and later would return to the original idea. Therefore, quotations in
the study sometimes combine, without ellipses, sentences which were separated by several lines, or occasionally by several pages, in the transcriptions from the tapes. In other cases, the original order in which a speaker said certain items has been changed in order to make a point more clearly. (In no case has this reordering been done to distort a speaker’s ideas.) At times I have also changed a few words, without using brackets, to allow a speaker’s meaning to remain clear when his or her words are moved out of their original conversational context and into this study. Finally, except for two quotations which are used to establish the difficulties with oral expression encountered by a student who had to defend her senior thesis orally, the quotations have been largely cleansed of the frequent occurrences of "um,"
"you know," and similar virtually meaningless syllables common to conversational English.

More problematic are the cases in which an interview was not taped, as was the case with roughly 20% of the interviews conducted for the study. As previously mentioned, I took notes during these interviews and then, using the notes and my memory, typed up reconstructions of the conversations as soon as possible after the interviews had taken place. I am confident that these reconstructed conversations faithfully record the central points and some of the more quotable wordings from the interviews. In fairness, however, whenever the study quotes from one of these reconstructed
conversations, I have refrained from inserting nonstandard usages or other unique speech characteristics I recalled from the person being interviewed.

The reader may to some extent gauge the accuracy of these reconstructed interviews by examining data from an accidental experiment. Shortly after I had interviewed a teacher known in this study as Dr. Montgomery (discussed in detail in Chapter Eight), I became convinced that my tape recorder had not worked during the interview. Therefore, using my notes and my memory, I typed a reconstruction of the conversation. Because I had been busy, almost two weeks elapsed between the day I conducted the interview and the day I typed the reconstruction—a much larger time lapse than usual. Thus, one might expect that this was one of the less detailed, less accurate reconstructions.

Almost a year later, I discovered that the tape recorder had worked during the interview; I had simply marked the wrong side of the tape as containing the interview and thus had listened to the side of the tape which was still blank. Having discovered my error, I transcribed the interview. Thus, one can compare my reconstruction from notes with an exact transcription from the tape.

The following excerpt is a reasonably representative comparison among my notes, my reconstruction, the transcription from the tape, and a quotation from Chapter Eight based on that transcription. My notes record Dr.
Montgomery as saying at one point, while discussing a student’s oral defense of a senior thesis:

I told him "Not something you should be nervous about. We don’t brutalize the kids. Just get 'em to try to see it in a different light + see what could've done. Never see 'em go out angry. If paper not accepted, came out of weak dept.

Using these notes and my memory, I recorded this segment of the reconstructed conversation this way:

I told him, "This is not something you should be nervous about." We don’t brutalize the kids. We just try to get them to see it in a different light, to see what they could've done, directions they could’ve gone with their topic. But it’s not done in a malicious way--we’re gentle, really. You never see them go out of that room angry. Generally, if a paper is not accepted, that means it came out of a weak department.

And here are Dr. Montgomery’s actual words, as transcribed from the tape, other than changing the student’s actual name to "David," his pseudonym within this study:

I kept telling David, "This is not something you should be nervous about. If you don’t know more about your topic than four or five guys sitting around a table, you don’t deserve to pass this thing." We don’t brutalize the kids. We basically try to force them to see their paper in a new light, their research in a new light. And just give them an appreciation for what they didn’t do that they could’ve done. But I’ve rarely seen--I’ve sat in on hundreds of these things, and I’ve rarely seen a kid get angry. We’ll pull back. But we’ve flunked some of these, too, and the kid has to stay over the summer and finish up. And largely it's happened because the kid has come out of what I would consider a weak department.

Clearly, the transcription from the tape is longer and more detailed. The reconstructed version lacks the point about David’s knowing more about his topic than his committee
members know, the statement that Dr. Montgomery had attended hundreds of thesis defenses, and the explanation of what a student must do if he or she fails the exam. Moreover, the reconstruction's wordings are not entirely accurate, especially when I attempted to go beyond my notes and use my memory, distorting Dr. Montgomery's simple "We'll pull back" into "But it's not done in a malicious way--we're gentle, really." Overall, however, the reconstructed version accurately presents Dr. Montgomery's ideas, as well as most of his words. I am convinced that most of the reconstructed interviews (which are, again, only about 20% of the interviews in the study) maintain similar standards of accuracy.

Finally, by way of demonstrating the already-discussed liberties I have taken in changing words and rearranging sentences in the study's quotations, the transcribed version may be compared with the quotation as it appears near the end of Chapter Eight of this study:

We basically try to force students to see their research in a new light, to give them an appreciation of what they didn't do, what they could've done. But we don't brutalize the kids. We'll pull back. But we've flunked some of these, too, and the kid has to stay around the next semester and finish up.

In the actual interview, Dr. Montgomery had used his view of the function of the exam committee as support for his statements about reassuring David, his student, that David need not fear the oral exam. For the purposes of this study, however, Dr. Montgomery's view of the function of the
committee was more important than his reassurances to David. Thus, his sentences have been reordered somewhat, so that the quotation emphasizes the exam committee’s function and then provides transition to the next paragraph of the study, a paragraph which states that David did, in fact, pass the exam. In addition, Dr. Montgomery’s words "the kid has to stay around over the summer" have been changed to "the kid has to stay around the next semester" because David’s oral examination took place in August, so that if he had failed, he would have had to stay around during the fall, not the summer. This excerpt demonstrates reasonably well the usual relationship between the quotations in this study and the interviews from which the quotations are taken. If any reader seeks further information on the raw material of this study, I would be happy to provide access to my notes, tapes, reconstructions, and transcripts. I would probably treat such a reader with caution, however, since he or she would surely be even more obsessive-compulsive about details than I am.
Notes

1. The third student in all probability recopied a paper which she had used for a grade in another class the previous semester. Although she remains an important part of the sample because she exemplifies a common student approach to the research-paper assignment, her approach rendered multiple interviews unnecessary and library searches and individual conferences with the teacher nonexistent.
CHAPTER IV
SIX STUDENTS WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS IN A BASIC WRITING CLASS

The course described in this chapter is the most basic level at which a research paper is required of students at either the community college or the University involved in this study. The course is taught at an open-door community college where all full-time faculty members are required to teach fifteen-hour teaching loads each semester (usually five courses per semester) and where Basic Writing teachers are not required to meet academic standards equal to those required of teachers of college-level composition. If, as discussed in Chapter Three, this study involves a diverse sample, then the six students described in this chapter were the most "high-risk" students in the sample; at the same time, institutional priorities were such that these students were attempting to learn under highly adverse conditions.

This chapter follows six Basic Writers as they complete a research-paper assignment. The chapter discusses background conditions affecting the students' work; the students' processes of researching and writing; and the finished papers. The chapter then draws conclusions.
Background

The Institution

At the time of this Basic Writing class, the community college was undergoing rapid growth in enrollment. Although the upsurge in enrollment often made necessary the hiring of many part-time instructors and sometimes made finding enough qualified instructors extremely difficult, the college continued to seek higher enrollment through an aggressive marketing campaign. The school’s instructional fees (tuition) remained among the lowest in the state, a circumstance which made possible the growth in enrollment but which was itself made possible by the full-time faculty’s heavy teaching loads and by heavy reliance on part-time instructors. Growth in enrollment resulted largely from an influx of nontraditional students: roughly three-fourths of the college’s new students were required to take Basic Writing, Developmental Reading, or Developmental Mathematics, with most developmental students required to take courses in more than one of these areas. Thus, as enrollment increased, the college had a particular need for more instructors in developmental courses, instructors who did not necessarily have to possess a level of education in their subject area equal to the level required to teach college-level courses.

The Course

Students scoring roughly in the bottom quartile on the English portion of the ACT were required to take a writing
test when they enrolled at the community college. Depending on their performance on the writing sample, those students were placed either in First-Year Composition or at one of the college's three levels of Basic Writing. The class discussed in this chapter was a section of Developmental Writing II, the most advanced of the three levels of Basic Writing, and the only level of Basic Writing at which the research paper was required.

Sample Selection

As discussed in Chapter Three, my choices of class, teacher and students were guided simply by what was available. During the semester in which I wished to deal with Basic Writing students, this was the only section of Developmental Writing II meeting at a time when my schedule permitted me to observe. My methods of recruiting Basic Writers for the sample are described on pages 88 and 89.

The teacher later characterized this class as an unusually good Developmental Writing II group, and described five of the six volunteers as the class's best writers, writers who perhaps had not needed Basic Writing at all. Writing samples from five of the six students appear later in this chapter and may allow readers to evaluate the writers' competence for themselves.

Data Collection

I sat in on the class, taking notes, throughout the four weeks in which the research paper and assignments leading
toward the research paper were the chief focus of class time. Because the class frequently met as a workshop in the college library, I was also able to observe and take notes as five of the six students in the sample sought and read sources and as four of the six conferred individually with the teacher, discussing rough drafts and plans for upcoming work. In addition, I interviewed three of the students three times apiece, twice during the process of working on the papers and once after turning in the research paper. I interviewed the other three students once apiece, during the time when they were researching the papers. I also interviewed the teacher after she had graded the research papers. Of the thirteen interviews I conducted with persons discussed in this chapter, eleven were transcribed from audiotape, and the other two were transcribed from notes.

Five of the six students provided photocopies of the final copies of their research papers, with the teacher’s grades and written comments. Three of the six also provided copies of earlier drafts, including, in two cases, the teacher’s written suggestions for revision. In addition, two of the six provided copies of their pre-first-draft notes. The teacher also provided copies of all handouts she used.

The Students

Basic information about the students appears in Table 3 on page 118. Carol and Walter are African-Americans, while the other students are Caucasians.
Table 3
BASIC WRITING STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Father's Educ.</th>
<th>Mother's Educ.</th>
<th>Research Paper Topic</th>
<th>College GPA**</th>
<th>College Credits</th>
<th>Grades in College-Level Writing Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>nutrition</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>child abuse</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>computers in the workplace</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>presidents and the media</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>steroids</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>C, W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>elem. school</td>
<td>drug abuse</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>C, B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All listed names are pseudonyms.

**College GPA, college credits, and grades in college-level writing classes are all as of Summer 1992, three years after the class described in this chapter took place. When the class began, most of the students had not yet taken any college-level classes. Thus, the last three columns of the table constitute a tiny follow-up study. The GPA includes only college-level classes, not remedial or developmental classes. The credits are semester hours. The college-level writing classes are first-year composition except in the case of Ann, whose program instead requires a 100-level technical communications class. "W" means that the student withdrew from the course. "WP" means that the student was passing at the time she withdrew.
Ann was in her second semester at the community college and her second Basic Writing class. Highly self-disciplined, she chose a topic and began researching early. She explained that her full-time job as a bank teller and plans for her upcoming marriage, scheduled for the week after the paper was due (the due date was the last day of the semester), left her with only limited time to study, so that she felt pressured to "stay a step ahead of the class."

Carol, like Ann, balanced classes with a full-time job--in Carol's case, as a ward secretary at a nursing home. The child of parents who had not progressed beyond elementary school, she was in her first semester of college, almost twenty years after she had finished high school.

Melanie was in her third semester of college, but like Ann and Carol, she had yet to take anything but developmental classes. Her time constraints were even more urgent than Ann's and Carol's: she worked 48 hours per week as an unskilled laborer in a hosiery mill, drove an hour each way to take evening classes, and then returned home at night to care for the son whose birth, seven years earlier, had caused her to drop out of high school as a sophomore.

Naomi, in contrast, attended school full-time and did not mention having a job, part-time or full-time. In addition, she had already passed four college-level courses, interspersed among the developmental courses she had taken during four previous semesters at the college.
Sam, however, had never taken a college-level course, even though he was now attending his second college. The previous year, he had attended a state university on a football scholarship, but even though he had been enrolled exclusively in developmental courses, he had lasted less than a year because, as he put it, "I couldn't hack it as far as grades go." Now in his first semester at the community college, he hoped to improve his grades, transfer to another state university, and play football again. However, he struggled to overcome a reading and writing background which had caused him to score a 280 on the verbal portion of the SAT and which had left him self-conscious about his speech patterns. "I can't stand to talk," he said. "It makes me feel like a jock, for sure." In addition, although he began the semester with no other major time commitments besides classes, midway through the semester he began working 45 hours per week at a golf course.

Walter, one of ten brothers and sisters raised by an unemployed single mother, had wanted to attend college immediately after graduating from high school but had been unable to afford to do so. Instead, he had enlisted in the Army and had remained in the military for twenty-four years. Within a month of leaving the Army, he had enrolled for classes at the community college, where he was now in his first semester. Of his roundabout path to college, he said, "I'm finally back where I should've been to start with." Like
most of the others, he balanced classes with a full-time job, heading a department store's maintenance crew.

As is often the case with Basic Writers, these six students were pioneers, entering new territory when they enrolled at the community college. In Bakhtinian terms, the voices they had encountered earlier in their lives were not ones which would increase their chances of succeeding in higher education. Virtually nothing in their backgrounds had even remotely prepared them for college. First, as noted in the table on page 118, none of them has a parent who graduated from a four-year college, and only two have parents who ever attended college. Three of the six come from parents who had never even reached high school. Melanie's father had recently begun taking a reading class for functionally illiterate adults, and Walter and Carol both indicated that their parents had "learned the three R's," but little more. Moreover, the parents' occupations--bar owner, welder, maintenance man, plumber, unemployed single mother of ten--are not the occupations one would expect from parents of traditional college students.

Nor did the students grow up in family climates likely to steer them toward academics. "Really, my whole family is drawn more to athletics," Naomi said. Ann said of college, "It was just something that I never even thought about. I always thought just rich kids get to go to college." Most of the others, when asked about parental attitudes toward
education, stated that they couldn't remember anything.

Melanie's mother was the one exception. "My mom really wanted me to finish, to graduate, and then to go to college," Melanie said. "She always said to me and my sister to be independent and not depend on nobody else." Even in this case, though, one may see relatively low expectations: to "finish" and to "graduate," to Melanie's mother, is to earn a high school diploma, something Melanie's parents did not do. Nor did Melanie graduate from high school in the traditional sense: after dropping out of school as a pregnant high school sophomore, she eventually received a G.E.D.

Not surprisingly, then, the students had not gone through school with the goal of preparing themselves for college. During the interviews, they repeatedly described their previous schooling in terms of missed opportunities and unfulfilled potential. "College was the furthest thing from my mind in high school, so I took off-the-wall classes, not the English you'd take for college," Ann said. Others expressed the problem in terms of daily attitude rather than in terms of class selection. "I wasn't really attentive until my junior year in high school," Walter said. "After that, I began to really buckle down and study. But I remember my English teacher telling me, 'I think you started a little too late.'" Sam, after saying, "I haven't caught up in my reading," added that the root of his reading difficulties was not a vision problem, but rather that "I just never liked to
read, so I wouldn't do it." And as already mentioned, Melanie simply missed most of high school.

If the students were unprepared for college in general, they were especially unprepared for writing classes. Of the three who had attended high school recently enough to recall their education in some detail, none recalled writing more than two essays in their entire time in high school, and one asserted that she had written no essays at all. "I never felt confident about my writing, never enjoyed writing," said Naomi. "So I always tried to avoid writing classes. I took the easy way out." The students' recollections fit with previous research, which has shown a correlation between a lack of writing in high school and a student's being placed in developmental writing classes in college (McQueen, Murray, and Evans 419-23). Two of the six students had written at least one research paper in high school; but for one of these two students, Naomi, the two "research papers," while requiring citations, a bibliography, and note cards, were each only two paragraphs long. Naomi was also the only one to have completed a research paper for another college class. Four of the six students had never before attempted a research paper— and some, prior to this class, had scarcely attempted an essay of any kind.

As already mentioned, most of the students faced the further obstacle of balancing classwork with full-time jobs. Most, in fact, were in school mainly in hopes of moving up
from their current jobs. Ann said that after seeing other employees with college degrees move ahead of her, "I realized, Lord, I'll be stuck as a teller for the rest of my life if I don't get my butt in gear. So here I am."

Community college has been called "the school of the second chance," and for these students, the description fits. For some, however, the chance was a desperate long shot. Melanie, for example, lacking a junior and senior year in high school, driving an hour each way to classes, working almost fifty hours per week as an unskilled mill laborer, and raising a seven-year-old son, lasted only one more semester before dropping out of school with a "D" in the only college-level class she had completed. Yet as Table 3 makes clear, a modest follow-up study three years after the course took place revealed that four of the six students were still making steady, if rather slow, progress toward their degrees.

The Teacher

The students' teacher, an African-American woman in her mid-thirties whose pseudonym within this study is Ms. Gibson, faced obstacles as a teacher which were almost as daunting as the obstacles faced by some of the students. With a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in business, Ms. Gibson had originally been hired by the college to teach what at the time of her hiring was called Secretarial Science. She was, however, denied tenure, perhaps in part because her department was already heavily tenured and because the college
enforced a cap on the maximum percentage of tenured faculty. However, the administration, which was facing a racial discrimination suit from another faculty member within the same department, sought to retain Ms. Gibson in another capacity. Eventually, Ms. Gibson was offered a position teaching Basic Writing at the community college, provided that she would take eighteen hours of graduate classes in English as soon as possible. Although she was reluctant to take graduate-level classes in a field in which she had taken very few undergraduate courses, Ms. Gibson accepted the offer. During her first year as a Basic Writing teacher, Ms. Gibson had taught exclusively the most elementary of the college’s three Developmental English classes, a course consisting largely of grammar instruction, combined with occasional instruction in the writing of one-paragraph themes. At the time of the course described in this study, however, Ms. Gibson had completed the required graduate hours in English and had been teaching all levels of Basic Writing for a year.

Teaching Methods, Assignment, and Criteria for Grading

Ms. Gibson was a relative novice in the teaching of writing; she was not particularly confident of her ability as a student of English; and she was in the precarious position of seeking tenure from people who knew that she was not teaching within her area of academic expertise. As a result, she was perhaps unusually susceptible to being influenced by others in her teaching. The school’s more experienced full
time Basic Writing teachers, who would eventually populate her tenure committee in her new position, generally taught in a way which confirmed Stephen North's observation that teachers often accept innovations only in combination with traditional methods (Making 43), thus often transmogrifying the innovations (Making 25). These teachers often taught workshop courses, strongly emphasizing invention, peer editing, individual teacher-student conferences, and revision, yet generally demanded five-paragraph themes with three-part thesis statements, graded essays by deducting a standardized number of points for various categories of errors, and sometimes required students to pass standardized grammar and punctuation tests in order to pass the course. This combination of approaches, which might seem peculiar to many composition theorists and researchers, may have seemed natural to one with Ms. Gibson's teaching background: having spent years teaching typing and word processing, Ms. Gibson was accustomed to working individually with students as they worked on course-related projects, but she was also accustomed to teaching business correspondence, a type of writing which is often formula-bound and in which spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors are grave matters, potentially reflecting unfavorably on a company's image.

Whatever the influences and motivations, Ms. Gibson outdid even the other Basic Writing teachers in combining a workshop approach characteristic of pedagogical liberals with
a concern for formulae and surface correctness characteristic of pedagogical conservatives. Except for one 45-minute lecture and one hour-long lecture, all class sessions during the four weeks preceding the research paper's due date were conducted in the library. There, students worked on their papers and critiqued each other's rough drafts while Ms. Gibson conferred with students individually, asking them about their progress and plans or reading their rough drafts and making suggestions.

Moreover, the research paper was to be the third in a series of cause-effect papers, and Ms. Gibson encouraged each student to choose a single general subject for the entire three-paper sequence. The first paper was required to stress causes, with students required to mention (although not necessarily to cite in a standardized format) one magazine article. The second paper was to stress effects, with students required to mention a different magazine article. The third paper, which Ms. Gibson and the students referred to as "the research paper," was to combine causes and effects, with students required to cite three magazine articles, using MLA format. By choosing a single general topic for the entire sequence, students could begin work on the research paper with some background expertise already acquired and could more easily formulate a focus for their papers. Thus, Ms. Gibson's approach to the assignment fits with Arthur Applebee's claim that "Breaking assignments into smaller, more manageable
segments to be completed one at a time can be a very effective way to lead students into more complex writing tasks" (80). In one sense, the first two papers in the sequence were extreme cases of the kind of pre-first-draft writings which, as discussed in Chapter One, Stotsky regards as crucial to students' formulation of a focus for research papers. In another sense, the entire three-essay sequence closely resembles the "portfolio method" which has recently been adopted by many progressive composition instructors.

At semester's end, Ms. Gibson expressed satisfaction with her decision to place the research paper at the end of a sequence of linked assignments. "This way, they weren't afraid of the research paper," she said. "In fact, by the second paper, they were eager to get on with it, eager to get that second paper out of the way and get going. And they didn't get tired of their topics."

Interviewed shortly after receiving the assignment, Ann also expressed approval of the sequence as a way to introduce the research paper:

It takes a lot of the stress off. I was so nervous, especially with it being my first research paper. It was like, "Oh, a research paper, omigosh." And then she said, "You can do cause, effect, and then the third one," and it was like ten pounds lifted off my shoulders. I thought, "Hey, that sounds simple."

Yet in contrast with Ms. Gibson's workshop approach to class time and portfolio-like approach to the research-paper assignment, in other ways Ms. Gibson seemed as formula-bound
as the most conservative teachers. On all of their essays except the research paper, the students were required to write five-paragraph themes with three-part thesis statements and with each body paragraph containing three subtopics in its development. The research paper, in turn, was to contain at least seven paragraphs: an introductory paragraph; at least five paragraphs of causes and effects or else at least four paragraphs of causes and effects followed by a paragraph containing the student’s views of the issue and possibly suggesting a solution; and a concluding paragraph. Moreover, in every essay, body paragraphs were to contain at least six sentences, but not more than eight (although compound or complex sentences could receive "extra credit," counting as more than one sentence apiece), while the introductory and concluding paragraphs could be shorter—ideally, four or five sentences.

Furthermore, in her discussions of the grading of essays, both in class and when interviewed, Ms. Gibson seemed concerned almost exclusively with surface correctness, an attitude which may well reflect the influence of the college’s other full-time teachers of Basic Writing, and perhaps also Ms. Gibson’s insecurity as a writing teacher. Discussing her grading practices, she stated:

Of course, if there’s a comma splice, I’ll deduct ten points from the grade on the paper. Same with fragments and run-ons. The other Developmental English teachers take off ten points every time the student makes one of those errors, but on most essays I only do it the first time. That’s terrible
on my part, I know. But on the research paper, I do take off the points every time, because they’ve had longer to work on that one and plenty of chances to get their classmates to read it and help them find mistakes.

The paper’s format, however, was even more important to Ms. Gibson. Here, too, Ms. Gibson’s attitude may well reflect the influence of other teachers, although not, in this case, other teachers of Basic Writing. When Ms. Gibson was asked about her grading methods, her first words were these:

Format is always the first thing I look for. I won’t read anything in the paper itself until I’ve read the title page, the outline, the headings on each page, and the Works Cited page. I warn my students, maybe it’s because I’m from the Business School, but if a period is missing at the end of a Works Cited entry, I’ll count off a point--not just a point off their grade for the paper, but a point off their grade for the course. Same with a comma in the wrong place on the Works Cited page or a period before the parentheses instead of after in a citation.

As will be discussed later in the chapter, examination of graded papers revealed that Ms. Gibson did not really enforce any of her stated criteria for grading. As Judith Goetz and Margaret LeCompte have noted, teachers who are asked about their classes tend to report what is "socially acceptable" rather than reporting what they actually do (110).

Nevertheless, as Goetz and LeCompte also note, useful information may be gleaned from "what people think they do or what they think is socially acceptable to do" (125). Clearly, for example, Ms. Gibson believed that it was "acceptable" to deduct ten points for each sentence boundary error--preferably on all essays, not only on research papers--whether or not she
could bring herself to grade her students' texts this way. If the Bakhtinian concept of **heteroglossia** may be combined with the Foucaultian notion of institutional influences as "composing" individuals, then one could argue that Ms. Gibson as a Basic Writing teacher had been largely composed by the voices of her former teachers and her former colleagues in Business Departments, as well as by her fellow Basic Writing teachers. Most of all, Ms. Gibson had been composed by those institutional forces which had declared her to be a teacher of Basic Writing, thus removing her from her field of expertise and forcing her to start almost from scratch in developing her expertise in another field.

At times, Ms. Gibson's incomplete familiarity with her new academic discipline was as evident as was her intense concern with paper format. Ms. Gibson went into considerable detail about paper format during a one-hour lecture to her students, as these excerpts demonstrate:

---After the title page goes your outline. Put the heading "Outline" two inches from the top--that's twelve spaces--and then triple-space.

---Your name, address, and the course number go in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Come down one inch from the top of the page for your name and address. Then hit the tab key to set up a consistent place to number the page. Then triple-space and type the title of the paper, in initial caps., not all caps. Then triple-space after the title and begin writing. On the second page, give your first initial, then a period, then a space, then your last name, then a space, and then the page number. That format goes through the rest of the paper.
Yet despite this concern with format and despite her threats to lower course grades for a missing period on the Works Cited page, when Ms. Gibson fielded questions from the students after her lecture, she

-- did not know how to cite an article from an anthology and could not find the correct form in the class's handbook;

-- stated that if a magazine article had no listed author, one should put the name of the magazine, not the first key word from the article's title, in the parenthetical citation, and one should begin the Works Cited entry with the name of the magazine, not the title of the article;

-- replied, when asked about a sample research paper's Works Cited entry which began with three dashes and a period, "That probably means the book had no author listed." (A student in the class then pointed out to her a passage in the handbook explaining that this form meant "same author as in previous entry.")

-- was unable to explain correctly the use of ellipsis points and was apparently unaware that brackets may be used to clarify a quotation.

While such matters are minutiae, perhaps significant only because of Ms. Gibson's own emphasis on surface details, at other times Ms. Gibson's uncertainty extended to broader matters of language use. When Ann, unable to find an encyclopedia entry in the alphabetical place she expected, asked Ms. Gibson how to spell "nutrition," Ms. Gibson did not know how and instead asked me. More significantly, Ms. Gibson did not always seem comfortable with reading. This discomfort may have stemmed partly from difficulty with decoding skills: when reading aloud from the textbook in class, Ms. Gibson stumbled over polysyllabic words and was unable to decode the
word "obscurity." The discomfort may also have reflected the background Ms. Gibson brought to the texts she read: when reading aloud to the class from one of Walter's sources for his research paper, she read about President Bush's escalating anger toward one whose name she read as "Panama’s Manuel Antonio--Somebody, I don't know." During the summer in which the course took place, the leading story in newspapers nationwide, as well as in magazines like Time and Newsweek, was President Bush's deteriorating relationship with Panama's Manuel Antonio Noriega.

Ms. Gibson's unease as a writing instructor may partially explain her approach to class hours. Although the class was scheduled to meet twice a week from 5:30 to 7:45, Ms. Gibson sometimes arrived as late as 5:55 and sometimes left as early as 7:10. Moreover, for the final week of research paper work, Ms. Gibson asked that I supervise the library sessions because prior to learning that she had been given this summer-session course, she had already arranged to be on vacation that week. (With their library research essentially complete, scarcely any of the students attended class sessions during the week that Ms. Gibson was gone.)

When interviewed, Ms. Gibson explained her attitude toward attendance by stating,

By the end of the semester, I don't keep track of attendance, but I do keep track of weekly progress. But the students don't necessarily have to meet with me in the classroom to show me their progress. They can come by my office or just wherever, and show me what they've done and where they are.
Actually, during the classes I observed, Ms. Gibson did take attendance. However, during interviews the students stated that Ms. Gibson did not care when they arrived for class or when they left.

Despite this casual attitude toward class time, Ms. Gibson seemed perfectly willing to devote time to her students. On one occasion she stayed more than half an hour past the scheduled end of class, conferring with individual students who had stayed late to work on their papers, and she always seemed willing to confer with class members in her office. Perhaps the circumstances surrounding her teaching position left her more comfortable working with individual students on her own time than with groups of students during official class hours.

With all of these background influences, then, the students turned to the research-paper assignment.

The Research-Paper Processes

Topic Selection

Ms. Gibson encouraged the students to choose topics that would hold their interest throughout the three-essay sequence. Because the students’ sources were to be magazine articles, she also recommended that each student find a magazine article that he or she liked and use it as the basis for selecting a topic.

Although five of the six students heeded the advice to choose a topic based on personal interest, they generally did
not use a magazine article as the basis for their selection. In fact, while many of the more experienced college students discussed in later chapters of this study selected topics based on interests acquired in other college courses or in their personal reading, five of the six Basic Writers did not mention their reading, either for courses or for pleasure, as an influence in topic selection. Just as less experienced readers are at a disadvantage in reading because of the limited experience they bring to a text, so Basic Writers may be at a disadvantage in topic selection because of limited experience in encountering topics within texts.

Whether or not because of a lack of textual experience, the Basic Writers generally selected their topics based on their everyday experiences. Sam, who had used steroids during his high school and college football career, chose to write about steroids; Melanie, who hoped a major in computer science would help her find a better job at the hosiery mill, chose to write about computers in the workplace; Ann, who was heavily involved in a fitness program, chose to write about nutrition; and Walter, who had formed strong opinions about drugs based on observations during his 24-year military career, chose to write about drug abuse. Even Carol, who at first stated that she had taken Ms. Gibson’s advice, writing about child abuse because she had been fascinated by an article in People magazine, later added that she had been raped at sixteen and said, "This [topic] is kind of close. I can put myself in the
child's place as well as the mother's."

The one Basic Writer who chose her topic based on previous reading and previous coursework was Naomi, the only one of the six who had already taken any college-level courses. Naomi received permission from Ms. Gibson to rework a paper she had completed for a speech class. Thus, Naomi's topic--recent presidents' attempts to control the media--resulted largely from the focus of the speech class and from the convenience of not having to start from the beginning on a new topic.

Besides personal interest, the Basic Writers were also influenced by availability of information, both in the form of library resources and in the form of experiential knowledge. Walter stated that he had been influenced by the ease with which he could find articles about drug abuse in the Social Issues Resource Series (SIRS) notebooks. "All the facts and figures were there," he said. "I didn't have to go from book to book to find what I needed. The SIRS index really made up my mind as to what to do my paper on."

When the students rejected a topic they had considered, they almost invariably did so because they believed that they could not find enough sources or enough things to say about the topic. Carol originally tried to research "flee [sic] bargaining," but stopped because, she said, "I had so much trouble finding the right things." (If her mispronunciation of "plea bargaining" reflects the spelling under which she
sought material, one can understand why she had trouble locating sources.) Sam stated that he had considered writing about abortion, a topic on which he had done research for a speech in Developmental Reading, but added, "I thought, ‘I know more about steroids,’ so I thought I’d do the research paper on that. Steroids—I’ve put a lot of thought into that."

In at least one case, a student’s topic-selection process was limited by the five-paragraph-theme, three-part-thesis requirement for the first two essays in the sequence. Melanie, who had recently been diagnosed as having a cyst in her breast, originally wanted to write about breast cancer. However, she felt that she had to find three causes, and, she claimed, "there’s really just one cause" for breast cancer. Thus, she eventually abandoned plans to write on this topic.

Task Representation

On the whole, the Basic Writers’ representations of their task fit Schwegler and Shamoon’s point that college students generally define research-paper assignments rather unambitiously, as summaries of other people’s information, packaged in a specific format and presented to an audience of teacher-as-examiner. Indeed, they had little choice but to adopt this rather unambitious task representation: while they had acquired considerable knowledge through personal experience, they may not have felt that they would legitimately use their own experiences in an assignment
defined in terms of a required number of articles cited. In David Bartholomae's term, they were unable to "invent the university" in such a way that their personal experiences could carry textual authority.

Sam, however, was an exception to this generalization. While virtually all of the published material about steroid use emphasizes the dangers involved, Sam firmly believed that when steroids are used (in his view) properly, their benefits far outweigh the dangers. Thus, he set himself the task of revising the established view. In contrast to the usual student tactic of citing sources to support (or even to supply) the paper's central points, Sam would presumably have to cite sources in order to question their premises. Such tactics are common enough in academic writing; the review of literature at the beginning of scholarly articles often exists mainly for the author to claim that previous work on his or her subject is in some way inadequate, and that his or her article will correct that inadequacy. However, even the most skilled academic might feel daunted by Sam's chosen task: to oppose a seemingly unanimous, well-supported, widely published view. Moreover, Sam had for supporting evidence only his own experience and his observation of his friends, none of whom were old enough yet to have felt the long-term effects of their steroid use. For his main pro-steroids argument during interviews—that steroid use is not particularly dangerous "if you do it the right way"—he had no support beyond anecdotal
information from relatively short-term users. Thus, although Sam had represented his task in terms which would be ambitious even for a college professor, he had little choice but to take an approach to supporting evidence which Mina Shaughnessy describes as typical of Basic Writers: "This is so because I'm telling you" (Errors 269).

While Sam had consciously chosen a task definition more ambitious than his evidence could support, Walter seemed to have subconsciously chosen a task definition more ambitious than his language skills could support. During interviews, he described himself as "very opposed to drugs in any form." He also, however, repeatedly pointed out that law enforcement agencies had been unable to control the widespread availability of illegal drugs in the U.S., a situation he compared with the prohibition of alcohol during the 1920's. Such a comparison is, of course, commonplace for those who favor legalization of marijuana and other illegal drugs, as they argue that as long as people who want drugs will get them anyway, it would be better if the government, rather than pushers and gangsters, received the revenues and controlled the products and the conditions under which the products were taken. Walter, however, apparently rejected this view, arguing that drugs are so seductive and addiction so dangerous that legalization would result in "pure destruction." Thus, while Walter opposed the legalization of currently-illegal drugs, he recognized the drawbacks of his position and the
strengths of the other side's arguments, a more sophisticated perspective than the black-or-white approach to issues seen in the writing of many beginning college students. However, to communicate this relatively sophisticated perspective in a research paper requires the ability to organize somewhat complex discourse, conceding certain points and qualifying certain claims while still vigorously advocating one's views. Even at the sentence level, the task Walter had chosen for himself requires considerable adroitness with qualifying phrases and transitions of the "Yet despite these difficulties, we must bear in mind that . . ." variety. For a Basic Writing student back in the classroom that semester for the first time in 24 years, such a task was formidable indeed.

Even when the Basic Writers defined the task as a straightforward informative report, they still defined the task as a meaningful learning experience. Because most of them had never before incorporated library research into their writing, even a relatively simple report using sources required them to develop new skills. Moreover, because most of them had selected topics on the basis of personal interest, the opportunity to learn more about their topics pleased them. For example, after briefly mentioning Walter's research, Melanie stated that she would not want to write about drug abuse because she had already received many lectures on that topic in high school and in other developmental classes.
"I've done realized a lot of that stuff already," she said.
"But with this topic [computers in the workplace], when I research, it's helping me do my paper and helping me learn, too."

In fact, the Basic Writers almost unanimously stated that although they found the research-paper assignment more difficult than the personal-experience-essay assignments they had completed earlier in the semester, they also learned more from completing the research paper than from completing personal-experience essays. Walter, for example, stated:

> When you doing writing that requires any type of research, it requires you to learn. You don't really learn from writing about yourself, because those things are already there--maybe just in your subconscious, but they're already there. You may be learning how to write, but you're not learning how to find different types of material and blend those materials in together to compose a good writing. And with the research, you learn about your subject. Even though I knew quite a bit about drugs because of being in the Army all those years, if you've never taken the time to actually read and to learn about it, you dealing more with myth than with facts. Writing from the library is challenging, and I guess the biggest thing about going to school is challenge, anyway.

Although many composition specialists would not accept Walter's view that personal-experience writing does not teach the writer anything besides how to write better, the other Basic Writers did seem to share that view, often echoing Walter's points, although in less detail.

The one exception was Ann. Although she seemed to accept the premise that little was to be learned from personal-experience writing, she apparently believed that this made
research-paper writing easier, because library sources provided one with something substantial to say. Ann said,

> With the other essays, I kept thinking, "This sounds so dumb. This is just off the top of my head. It doesn't leave the reader with any knowledge." But if I take something that's stated in a magazine, I feel better. I feel more confident. So this is easier.

While many composition specialists would reject Walter's view of personal writing, many would be equally uneasy with Ann's view that a magazine (apparently almost any magazine--one of the major sources for Ann's paper was Muscle and Fitness) automatically provides not only authority but also validity and knowledge. Nevertheless, as a group, the Basic Writers attached little value to their own experiences and views and rather uncritically accepted the published word as a source of learning. Even Sam, whose view of steroids was guided by his personal experiences rather than by the material he had encountered during research, stated that "you learn more" from research-paper writing than from personal-experience writing.

As asked whether they preferred research-paper assignments or personal-experience-essay assignments, two of the Basic Writers stated that they preferred research papers, largely because of what they perceived as a greater potential for learning; three stated that they preferred personal-experience essays, largely because they found such essays easier to write; and one had no preference. But in any event, the Basic Writers represented the research-paper task as more difficult, but more educational, than tasks they had completed earlier.
Audience

As part of their representation of any writing task, students must consciously or unconsciously envision an audience. Ms. Gibson had not required the students to specify an audience for this paper, and only two of the six students mentioned writing for an audience beyond teacher-as-grader. Perhaps not coincidentally, those two were Sam and Walter, who have already been described as defining their task more ambitiously than the other students did. Walter, whose willingness to see both sides regarding drug legalization made his paper's central point rather complex, said, "I felt I was writing for anyone who pick it up and read it, that they would know my intent." Sam, who was writing to debunk the established view of steroids, stated that he had gotten "kind of inspired to keep writing" by imagining his essay being published in Sports Illustrated.

All the Basic Writers, including the two who mentioned a larger audience, were well aware of Ms. Gibson as an audience. In discussing what Ms. Gibson was looking for in the paper, Sam stated,

She wants to see if we had the correct amount of sentences in a paragraph and all of our grammar corrected and everything. And getting it to look right with the bibliography and title page and all, because she really emphasized that. That one night, that was all she talked about, just about. Not so much ideas, because she really didn't go into depth about that.

Melanie, in turn, when comparing Ms. Gibson's expectations with those of her previous Basic Writing teacher, talked
exclusively in terms of paragraph length. And when asked how Ms. Gibson would evaluate the paper, Walter replied, "Number one, she really wanted us to follow the Harbrace [handbook]. She emphasized that quite a bit. And if you using someone else idea, give them credit, or it's plagiarism. She really stressed that." Asked how Ms. Gibson had defined "plagiarism" to the class, Walter replied, perhaps not surprisingly, in terms of a formula: five consecutive words copied from a source without quotation marks.

Ann was the only one of the Basic Writers to describe Ms. Gibson as concerned with ideas, as well as with surface correctness, stating:

My first Basic Writing class, the teacher would just mainly say, "Run-on sentence, subject-verb agreement," you know. But [Ms. Gibson], of course she'll say, "Your grammar's wrong here. Check your Harbrace," and all, but she'll also say, "Well, that just leaves me hanging. Say something else about this. And see if you can think of another word here."

One reason for Ann's differing perspective may have been that of the six Basic Writers, Ann was probably the least prone to errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, so that she and Ms. Gibson could feel more free to turn their attention to other matters.

Interestingly enough, none of the six commented on the seeming conflict between being encouraged to choose a topic they were strongly interested in and being graded largely on surface correctness rather than on ideas. Perhaps they simply assumed that all English teachers judged writing primarily in
terms of surface matters; after all, Ann described her previous Basic Writing teacher as being more exclusively concerned with grammatical correctness than was Ms. Gibson. Similarly, other than a passing mention by Naomi of the five-paragraph-theme form as "putting a limit on your writing," none of the Basic Writers mentioned any possible conflict between choosing a topic for personal interest and forcing their ideas to fit into requirements for a set number of paragraphs per essay and sentences per paragraph. Again, perhaps they assumed that all writing for English teachers had to conform to similar restrictions. Having faced restrictions regarding number of paragraphs per essay and number of sentences per paragraph in her previous Basic Writing class at the community college, Melanie apparently regarded such restrictions as a college-wide policy. Asked about writing in high school, she said, "Oh, I might have wrote an essay in tenth grade, but it wasn’t in [the college’s] form--you know, the five-paragraph way." Ann and Sam also stated they they had done virtually no writing in high school and that they had been required to write exclusively five-paragraph themes in their previous Basic Writing classes--in Sam’s case at a university in another state. They accepted, even expected, such restrictions because, in Bakhtinian terms, Ms. Gibson’s voice blended in predictable ways with the voices of previous teachers. To some extent, then, the Basic Writers assumed an audience of teacher-as-examiner, with "teacher-as-examiner" in
English classes defined in part as one who reads primarily to evaluate surface correctness and to count the number of sentences within paragraphs and the number of paragraphs within the essay.

Another element of Ms. Gibson as audience was, of course, that she required that the essays cite three magazine articles. Thus, at the same time that they were defining the writing task for themselves, the students were also seeking sources.

Finding and Evaluating Sources

When I observed them during class sessions in the community college’s library, the students used the library far more adroitly than one might have expected of Basic Writers. Granted, the students were working under ideal library conditions: because this was an evening class during the summer semester, the library contained few other students to compete for resources and for the reference librarian’s attention; because class sessions theoretically lasted from 5:30 to 7:45, the students had plenty of time immediately after the library orientation to put what they had learned into practice; and because the library staff takes justifiable pride in having created a user-friendly library, the students were encouraged to overcome any reticence they may have felt about libraries.

In fact, despite Collins, Mellon, and Young’s description of beginning college students as afraid of libraries,
discussed in Chapter Two, the Basic Writers seemed comfortable in the library. Naomi had already used the library while working on her previous research paper at the college, and Walter and Carol stated that although they had not used the library for previous college assignments, they had often come to the library on their own, between classes, to browse for pleasure. Ann, in turn, stated that she had already come to the library and had begun finding sources for her paper prior to the library orientation and the class sessions there.

In any event, during the class sessions in the library, the students used a wide variety of library resources. Since the assignment required that they cite at least three magazine articles, periodicals indexes received the most use. Five of the six students used INFOTRAC, a computerized index for general-interest periodicals, and some also used the computerized READER’S GUIDE ABSTRACTS. Almost all of the students also used the library’s microform readers and photocopy machines, and some used the periodicals holdings list, the Social Issues Resource Series (SIRS) notebooks, the shelves of current-issue magazines, the reference collection, the computerized card catalogue for books, and the general collection of books. None of the students seemed to encounter any serious difficulties locating sources.

Although all six students looked in the community college’s library and although the finished papers of all except Naomi cited sources that the students had located in
that library, most also sought sources elsewhere. Melanie, Sam, and Walter all reported using magazines they had already had at home, while Ann reported citing an article from a magazine she had borrowed from her brother, and Carol reported using the city’s public library as well as the college’s library. Sam, deeply committed to his view of steroids and unable to find support for that view in published material, supplemented his reading research with field research, interviewing his former high school football coach and, during workouts, asking his friends about the effects of their steroid use. "I took a little survey without letting people know they were being surveyed," he said.

While they seemed relatively skilled at locating potential sources, the Basic Writers seemed less skilled at evaluating the appropriateness of potential sources for college-level writing. In fact, their rather unselective attitude toward sources may have been one reason that they encountered little difficulty in locating sources which satisfied them. For example, Ann cited an article in *Muscle and Fitness* in her research paper, while Sam reported that he cited an article from *Muscle* magazine. Other than specifying that the sources had to be magazine articles, Ms. Gibson provided no instruction on evaluating sources during classes I observed, nor did her written comments on the papers or her discussion of the papers during our interview indicate that she regarded some sources as more appropriate than others.
For some of the students, the task of locating sources was simplified not only by a willingness to accept virtually any magazine as appropriate, but also by a willingness to use material from virtually any three articles on the same general subject, regardless of whether or not material from one article complemented material from the other two. Melanie, for example, juxtaposed an advertisement's information about features in a new model of computer with information from articles about computer-information break-ins and computer viruses. Ms. Gibson approved this combination of sources, suggesting during a conference that Melanie unify her material with the thesis statement, "Computerizing the workplace has had both positive and negative effects."

When students took the more sophisticated approach of attempting to focus more narrowly, they often found that their initial success in finding sources on their general subject did not necessarily translate into success finding information to support their particular focus. Walter reported finding a great deal of information about drugs and drug abuse, but very little about legalizing drugs. Sam found a great deal about the effects of steroid use, but very little about causes. And of course, Sam also found plenty of articles written not to praise steroids, as he wished to do, but to bury them.

Organizing Information and Finding a Focus

Since this was the first research paper for most of the Basic Writers, they were learning not only about locating
sources but also about reading sources with the expectation of eventually writing about what they had read. However, Ms. Gibson provided no instruction about notetaking during any of the class sessions that I observed, unless one counts her having handed out, without discussion, a sheet about plagiarism. Ironically, Ms. Gibson had copied almost everything from her plagiarism handout, verbatim and without attribution, from the standardized plagiarism handout used by the English Department at the university across town, where Ms. Gibson had taken her graduate hours in English.

All but one of the Basic Writers said that they took no notes from their reading, and that one writer had not used note cards. Ann said, "I just sort of memorized the parts I thought I could use," while Walter said, "I just reread 'em, reread 'em, and formulate ideas as I read." Walter also stated, "Every time I read the articles, I formulate something new and a different opinion." Given that he was not recording his changing ideas in writing and given that he had committed himself to communicating a more complex perspective than may be found in many essays by beginning college students, Walter’s repeatedly discovering "a different opinion" may have foreshadowed his later problems in creating a unified essay.

Like Walter, Melanie stated that she read her sources repeatedly--five or six times. Mary Lynch Kennedy describes such extensive rereading of texts as one characteristic of highly fluent college readers. However, another Basic Writer,
Naomi, said that she ordinarily uses paper clips to mark key pages from books and highlighter to mark key passages from photocopied articles, then goes back to find quotations she wants to use as she is writing the paper itself, an approach typical of less fluent readers, according to Kennedy (443).

Of course, reading is not the only way to develop one’s ideas prior to writing a first draft. As an invention technique for most essays, Ms. Gibson encouraged her students to create what she called a "nucleus"--a practice more widely known as "clustering," in which a student writes words or phrases associated with a topic on a sheet of paper, circling the words or phrases and connecting them with lines to show conceptual interrelationships. (For a more extended description of clustering, see Gabrielle Rico’s book Writing the Natural Way.) Of the four developmental students who mentioned this practice, three liked it and said it helped them get ideas. Although some felt that their reading of sources eliminated the need for clustering, at least two handed in clusters among the rough drafts and notes that Ms. Gibson encouraged the students to turn in along with the finished paper.

Ms. Gibson also asked the students to turn in an outline along with the research paper. During interviews, however, only two of the students mentioned the outline. Melanie seemed to put great stock in the outline, telling me just two days after the first library session and 3 1/2 weeks before
the paper was due, "I'd like to get an outline started for the research paper." Sam, in contrast, told me that he disliked outlines and that he would not outline his paper until after he had written the final copy.

Given Stotsky's view that ideally, the focus for a research paper should emerge through the interaction of thought and writing prior to the student's beginning of the first draft ("On Developing" 207), the Basic Writers' general lack of notes and lack of interest in outlines might seem discouraging. But because the research paper was to be the third in a series of cause-effect essays, with most students writing all three essays on the same general subject, one might expect the focuses of the research papers to emerge naturally from the students' experiences of writing the first two essays in the series. In fact, Ms. Gibson had told the students that they could transplant entire paragraphs from the first two essays into the research paper if they wished.

According to Ms. Gibson, most of the students rejected this "transplanting" approach, precisely because they had formulated a clearer focus as a result of writing the first two essays. She stated:

Most of them ended up doing a whole new paper on the research paper. They kept the same topics and a lot of the same information, but most of them started from scratch on that information, because by then they could see things more in depth. So they were able to take a new approach and develop their ideas more fully.
Perhaps, then, this linked-essays approach may help to introduce students not only to the research paper, but to extensive revision—as a literal "re-vision" of one's ideas, rather than as a mere search for awkward wordings and errors in mechanics. As will be discussed later in this chapter, however, examination of the students' research papers suggests that some students did not formulate a clear focus even after writing three essays on the same general subject.

First Draft

Although students were willing to be observed during almost all other activities related to the research paper—class sessions, library searches, reading and notetaking sessions, conferences with the teacher—they preferred not to be observed while actually writing the paper. The research paper was twenty-five percent of their grade for the course, and the actual writing required too much concentration for them to accept the potential for distraction and self-consciousness. While writing may be a social act, the students needed solitude, not sociality, to produce the initial draft. This held true not only for the Basic Writers, but for the entire sample. Nevertheless, one can glean considerable information from interviews and from examining the students' rough drafts and final copies.

All six Basic Writers stated that they habitually wrote their first drafts longhand. Two specified that they used pencil ("Too many mistakes for a pen," Walter said, laughing),
one specified pen, one said that either pencil or pen was acceptable, and two did not specify a writing utensil.

All six preferred to be at home when writing the rough draft, and all six preferred that it be silent when they write. Carol, however, said that she could write in noisy places if necessary, because her job (ward secretary at a nursing home) had taught her to tune out distractions. The other five were much more adamant about the need to get away from conversations, television, music. Walter said that if necessary he would persuade his wife to go shopping and take the children along, leaving him alone in the house; Melanie normally told her seven-year-old son to play outside and leave her alone; and Naomi always took her telephone off the hook. Ann and Sam both ensured themselves silence by writing at night when everyone else was asleep, with Sam usually starting at about one A.M.

Some of the students' comments about the rough draft seem to confirm ideas expressed by writing researchers and theorists. Walter said of his first draft, "Invariably I go back and look at it, and I change it as I go. Sometimes either my pen doesn't write as fast as my thoughts or vice versa." Walter's first sentence could refer to changes made between the first and second drafts, a time when, according to Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte, most revisions are made (407). Both Walter's testimony in other interviews and the physical appearance of his drafts prove that he makes such changes.
But the last part of Walter’s first sentence and the first part of his second sentence both suggest that he interrupts his first drafts frequently to edit what he has just written, even to the point of interrupting the flow of his ideas. If so, then Walter’s writing process resembles the processes of Basic Writers studied by Sondra Perl.

Carol’s process is more in line with the widely-stated need for incubation, for getting one’s conscious mind away from the writing task and letting the subconscious take over (Murray 171). Carol stated:

I can’t just sit down and decide I’m gonna write it. I have to take my time. It’ll come to me. A lot of the time, it’s so broad you just don’t know where to start. And then a lot of times you can have stuff bottled up inside you and you can’t really concentrate. So a lot of times I sit there and won’t write nothing. So I’ll start doing something else, not thinking about what I’m gonna write on, my mind is completely on something else, and then something’ll come to me and I’ll write it down.

Sometimes, writing about something else seemed to help the Basic Writers find their eventual topics. Carol stated that for the first of her three papers about child abuse, she had been sitting outside, unable to begin writing, and had decided to write a journal entry about her cat instead. As she wrote the journal entry, consciously thinking about her cat, she suddenly sensed how she wanted to begin the essay about child abuse and immediately began writing that essay. Similarly, Walter reported that for a personal-experience essay earlier in the semester, he had written clusters for
several topics and had begun to try to write the paper on one of those topics when suddenly a memory pierced his consciousness and, in his words, "All of a sudden I say, 'I'm not gonna do that other topic,'" after which he rapidly wrote an essay about the event he had just remembered.

Naomi, like many other writers, stressed the need for taking frequent breaks--perhaps further incubation periods--while writing the rough draft:

When I write it, I'm usually by myself in the bedroom, with no TV, no nothing. And I'll take breaks quite often. If I get blocked, I'll get up and go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, do something. A lot of times I'll lay there and go to sleep, and then I'll wake up and write some more.

Even though most of the students had written relatively few essays in school, all seemed well aware of their particular rituals and routines associated with writing, and all attempted to arrange conditions accordingly.

**Responses to Rough Drafts**

Whether through their statements during interviews, their actions during class sessions I observed, or both, all six Basic Writers indicated that once they had completed their rough drafts, they showed those drafts to other people in order to get advice about revising.

Only three of the six Basic Writers--Naomi, Sam, and Melanie--were asked if they usually showed their drafts to anyone else. All three reported customarily showing their drafts to a boyfriend, girlfriend, parent, or spouse. Besides convenience, the advantage of seeking such a person seemed to
be that because the writer and the reader knew each other well, the writer could evaluate how reliable the reader’s advice was and the reader could feel free to react honestly rather than feeling the need to be misleadingly diplomatic. "He’s pretty good at picking it apart," Naomi said of her boyfriend. "He’s more critical than if I’d let somebody else read it. He don’t mind saying, ‘This sounds like crap.’"

Naomi’s words "sounds like crap" suggest that her boyfriend may have given advice largely about wording problems, not necessarily about more large-scale matters. Similarly, Sam stated that his girlfriend’s advice involved exclusively proofreading matters, especially sentence boundary errors, while Melanie stated that her mother’s role was usually limited to finding awkward phrases that needed rewording. Melanie added that her husband sometimes suggested more large-scale changes, but that these changes always involved deleting faulty material, never suggestions for moving existing material or adding new material.

Perhaps because specific class sessions had been set aside for peer editing earlier in the semester, some of the students showed the drafts of their research papers to classmates. During the workshop sessions in the library, both Ann and Walter exchanged drafts and advice with other students. However, none of the Basic Writers described the peer editing sessions as having an effect on their final drafts. Perhaps they perceived their fellow Basic Writers as
lacking authority and expertise.

Other than Naomi, who was simply reworking a paper she had already submitted for a grade in another course, all of the Basic Writers attempted to confer with Ms. Gibson about rough drafts and plans for completing the research paper or other essays in the three-paper sequence. Sam, however, was unsuccessful in his attempt to confer with Ms. Gibson: after procrastinating in writing the rough draft of one of the papers in the sequence, he finally arrived in the library with his rough draft thirty minutes prior to the scheduled end of the last class period before Ms. Gibson was to leave on vacation, only to find that Ms. Gibson had left early. And on the research paper itself, Sam did not even begin his rough draft until the day before the paper was due, thus leaving him no opportunity to show the draft to Ms. Gibson.

During conferences with the other students, Ms. Gibson sometimes read the student’s rough draft aloud, making suggestions and comments as she went. Many of her comments demonstrated her concern with preset form for essays, as when she urged a student who was not in the sample to use a three-part thesis statement on one of the essays earlier in the sequence, prior to the research paper, or as when she told Melanie to add one sentence to one of her paragraphs because that paragraph had not yet reached the six-sentence minimum. Other comments demonstrated the importance she attached to document format, as when, without being asked, she pointed to
a page's upper right-hand corner and said to Melanie, "The page number goes here," or as when she told Carol to write out the words rather than using numerals for numbers from one to ten. Nevertheless, the conferences demonstrated that Ms. Gibson was not concerned exclusively with surface matters, but with ideas and organization as well. During a conference with Carol, Ms. Gibson stated that one paragraph of her draft of the first essay in the sequence did not logically fit, because it described a potential personal disaster which had been narrowly avoided, while the paragraphs on either side of it discussed personal disasters which had, in fact, occurred. And after a conference with Ms. Gibson, Melanie reported, "We discussed some articles that I was looking into for my next paper, and she just gave me some ideas to go along with what I had already."

Ms. Gibson's comments during her interview further testify to her interest in an essay's ideas, as well as its surface appearance. She described herself as becoming "really, really involved" with advising Carol and Melanie about their research papers. In both cases, she said, her involvement stemmed from the topics: child abuse in Carol's case and computers in the workplace in Melanie's. Ms. Gibson stated that she had very strong feelings about child abuse and that she had observed first-hand, as an employee, the effects when a company computerized its offices. As a result, she said, she had invested considerable time and energy in talking
to Melanie about her own experiences and to Carol about "different perspectives, different ways she could go with her topic." Ms. Gibson expressed satisfaction with the results of these efforts, saying,

When I saw the final versions of their papers, I could see places where they'd used some of those perspectives, some of the things I'd said. By hearing me talk through it, they were able to pick things up, understand their topics better.

Ms. Gibson's comments describe an ideal approach to the student conference, with the teacher encouraging the student to view revision as an opportunity to discover new perspectives rather than as merely a search for awkward wordings and errors in mechanics. As will be discussed later in this chapter, however, examination of Melanie's and Carol's final drafts still suggests certain limitations in their perspectives toward their topics.

Besides seeking advice from Ms. Gibson, Sam and Walter also showed their drafts to other teachers or teacher-figures. Although his late start precluded his showing her the research paper, Sam showed the drafts of his first two essays in the sequence to a woman who had been his high school English teacher. After stating that she ordinarily limited her comments to pointing out errors in grammar and punctuation, he added, "But when she saw what I was saying about steroids, she put in her two cents' worth." Her criticisms of steroid use, however, had no apparent impact on Sam's paper or on his plans regarding steroid use in the future.
Of the six students, Walter seemed the most determined to get a variety of people to read and respond to his drafts. When asked why, he responded in terms of the need to distance himself from his creation during revision, a concept stressed by Donald Murray (69) and others. Sounding remarkably like a composition researcher, Walter stated:

When a writer write things, he tends to see it from that same view. And he may read it four or five times, but he still tends to see it from the same view, because his or her thought pattern run along the same line. So you may not have written what you reading, because you know what you want to say. So an objective view is real nice to get, and I appreciate that very much.

Walter’s statement contrasts with the widespread portrayal of Basic Writers as limited by an egocentric viewpoint which leads to "writer-based prose." Walter’s view of the composing process was sophisticated enough that he took steps to overcome egocentrism.

In seeking "an objective view," Walter showed his drafts not only to a classmate and to Ms. Gibson, but also to a tutor in the community college’s Writing Center and to me. Besides Walter, the only other student in the entire sample to seek my advice on a draft of her research paper was Jacki, an unusually hard-working student who is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

A comparison of Walter’s drafts before and after his trip to the Writing Center suggests that the tutor may have provided what some would consider to be too much help. Here, for example, are the title and first paragraph of Walter’s
research paper as they appeared in his first draft:

The Drugged in America
America is one of the most powerful nations in the civilized world. We have progress far beyond most people wildest dreams, yet, we have not advanced enough to put a stop to people abusing both legal and illegal drugs. We even teach our young at a early age to began to use drugs.

And here is the opening paragraph of the second draft, after Walter took the paper to the Writing Center:

The Drugged affected Nation
America is one of the most powerful nations in the industrialized world due to many medical advances made by some of the finest minds in America. Our nation has advanced in the medical arena far beyond most nation’s wildest dreams and is able to provide the finest health care for its citizens. These medical advances are certainly to be applauded. Yet it is also very apparent that many citizens abuse the "miracle" of modern medicine to such an extent that America has become, "the most drug abusing nation in the industrialized world" (Vital Speeches of the Day 322). These abuses include not only illegal drugs but legal ones that are purchased by the family physician. Because we are indiscriminately taught at an early age that drugs are panaceas for what ails us, we must educate the public of the danger of drugs due to abuse.

Of course, the addition of cited material indicates that Walter had done more than take his draft to a tutor prior to writing the second draft. Moreover, as the most thorough reviser among the six Basic Writers, Walter was presumably the one most likely to improve his essay dramatically through revision. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that the person who wrote "We even teach our young at a early age to began to use drugs" is the person most responsible for composing "Because we are indiscriminately taught at an early age that drugs are panaceas for what ails us, we must educate the
public of the potential danger of drugs due to abuse." Significant intervention had evidently occurred.

Revision

Regardless of how many others read their rough drafts and played a role in their revisions, the Basic Writers as a group came across, both in interviews and when their drafts were compared to their finished papers, as conforming to the usual portrayal of student writers as revisers: they made a substantial number of small-scale changes, but very few large-scale ones.

Five of the six students (all but Carol) discussed their revising practices. Of these five, four indicated that their revisions almost exclusively involved punctuation, single words, or phrases, although they might occasionally add or delete a sentence. For example, Naomi described her usual process as writing a draft; showing it to her boyfriend for suggestions and spelling corrections; adding and deleting sentences, checking quotations and citations, and editing ("I mark all over the first copy") while sitting in front of the television; and rewriting the paper on a word processor, making more changes as she goes. Judging from her testimony, Naomi probably makes a large number of changes. However, given her direct statements ("I’m not one of these people who write it a thousand times") and given the fact that she writes the first draft in isolation with the phone off the hook but revises in front of the television, Naomi clearly regards
writing the first draft as requiring far more concentration and effort than revising requires. Thus, it seems likely that she rarely, if ever, makes large-scale changes after having completed the first draft. Similarly, when Sam discussed revision, he talked almost exclusively about avoiding sentence-boundary errors and changing individual words so that his vocabulary would sound more mature.

The remaining three students to be discussed in this section--Ann, Melanie, and Walter--all provided copies of rough drafts as well as final copies of their papers. Thus, one could compare what they said about revision with physical evidence of what they did during revision. In all three cases, the physical evidence indicated that they described their revision processes accurately.

Ann described herself as basically a "two-draft writer." Asked about the research paper, she said that she showed her rough draft only to Ms. Gibson, and then made minor editing changes and "added a couple of sentences, one at the end of a paragraph and one at the beginning," before handing in the final copy. A comparison of her rough draft to her finished copy demonstrates that her description of the changes is accurate right down to the places within paragraphs where she added the two sentences. In the places in the rough draft corresponding to where Ann added the two sentences to her final copy, Ms. Gibson had written "concl." and "trans.", indicating that during their conference she had encouraged Ann
to add a concluding sentence at the end of one paragraph and a transitional sentence at the start of another paragraph. Of the remaining sentences in Ann's essay, slightly over two-thirds are identical in wording to the sentences in her rough draft, while the remaining sentences have undergone a one-word, a two-word, or in one case a three-word change, or else a change in punctuation. Other than the addition of the two new sentences, the sentence order has not been altered in any way. Examination of Ann's rough draft also reveals words crossed out in slightly over one-third of the sentences, and a single word added above the line in one sentence. The remaining sentences appear to have undergone no revision during Ann's process of composing the first draft.

Melanie, acutely aware of her tendency toward awkward wordings and errors in mechanics, apparently went through more drafts than most of the others, but restricted herself to relatively small-scale changes. She stated that she began with a handwritten draft of the research paper, then showed it to her husband and her mother, wrote a second draft longhand, then wrote a third draft on a word processor and showed it to Ms. Gibson for suggestions, and finally made changes on a word processor before turning in the final draft. She also stated that even after having written three drafts, she changed the paper "extensively" following her conference with Ms. Gibson. However, when asked about the types of changes she makes during revision, Melanie replied, "I usually work on wording,
because I’m awkward in my wording. I keep my three main points the same." Two-thirds of the sentences in her final copy were worded identically to their wordings in her first draft, not counting spelling corrections in about one-fifth of these. Roughly fifteen percent of the sentences had undergone one-word, two-word, or three-word changes, while roughly ten percent had been more extensively reworded, usually at the clause level. Five sentences in the final draft had been added in their entirety since the first draft, while two other sentences, although unchanged in wording, had been reversed in their order within the paragraph. Just under one-third of the sentences in her first draft contained words which had been crossed out, with other words substituted above the line. However, the substitutions above the line appear to be in a different person’s handwriting, suggesting these changes were not made by Melanie as she wrote the rough draft, but by Melanie’s mother or her husband.

Of course, one must keep in mind that the research paper was, for most of the students, their third consecutive essay on the same general subject. Thus, when the students began composing the first drafts of their research papers, they had already written repeatedly about their subjects. This circumstance may have caused them to revise less extensively, either because they could capture their ideas on paper more quickly or because they may have grown somewhat weary of reworking their writing on this subject.
Walter, however, revised his research paper extensively. Given his already-discussed views of revision and his eagerness to seek responses to his rough drafts, it should come as no surprise that Walter habitually revised much more extensively than did the other Basic Writers. During the three-essay sequence, Walter usually wrote four drafts per essay, the first two longhand, the last two on a word processor. But while this total number of drafts does not differentiate Walter from Melanie, who also said that she wrote four drafts, Walter’s approach from draft to draft is much different from hers, as he makes clear in this statement:

Sometimes I just set it [the first draft] aside and write the whole thing over. On the first essay [in the three-essay sequence], I wrote one complete essay, and then I just thought about it over a period of time, just set it aside and thought about it, thought about it, thought. And two days later, I started all over again, changed that whole essay and didn’t bother trying to correct, didn’t even look at the first one. I just rewrote the whole thing.

This approach seems consistent with Walter’s approach to reading sources: as mentioned earlier, he took no notes, but simply thought about what he read, and then reread it frequently, getting new and different ideas each time.

Although Walter did not put aside the first draft of his research paper and start again from scratch, he did change the text dramatically from one draft to the next. Although some of these changes, as mentioned earlier, may reflect excessive intervention from an overly zealous tutor at the community college’s Writing Center, many reflect Walter’s developing
thoughts about his topic. For example, a portion of Walter’s first draft read:

Marijuana had been around from the beginning of time, but during those days of protest people began to express their dissatisfaction with our country policies using drugs as a means of escape. The myth used by users were that marijuana was safer than alcohol, marijuana produced no hangovers, no bad breath, and above all no liver damage. Those myths are what made this drug so attractive to the younger generation. Being twenty-one before realizing what marijuana were, my values on life had more of a meaning than to get caught up in a craze.

The marijuana period brought about many changes in people attitudes and moods. The stepping stone which could be referred to as marijuana, caused many users to moved on to harder drugs. Herion and cocaine became popular during this period.

The corresponding section of Walter’s next draft read:

Marijuana had been around from the beginning of time, but during the 60’s protest people began to express their dissatisfaction with policy makers, and used drugs as their means of escape. Even though the sale and use of Marijuana was wide spread, legalization of this drug was never thought about. Law enforcement had to add special teams to its force to handle the Marijuana use. It could have been so easy to put packages of Marijuana cigarettes on a counter and sold them, and made the profit from the sale. The stepping stone to harder drugs could be said to be Marijuana. After that period Cocaine became popular.

In revising, Walter dropped material which describes marijuana’s popularity as resting on myths, material in which he portrays himself as old enough and experienced enough to be impervious to marijuana’s appeals; moreover, he added material emphasizing how difficult and expensive it is to enforce marijuana laws and how convenient and financially profitable it would be to legalize marijuana. Thus, Walter has revised not only his wordings but his attitude toward the paper’s
central issue, the possible legalization of now-illegal drugs: the revised version seems much more sympathetic to the possibility of legalizing marijuana.

Unfortunately, as already mentioned, Walter did not necessarily possess the language skills required to smoothly incorporate arguments favoring legalization of marijuana into a paper which would finally oppose legalization of marijuana. The second draft goes directly, without a paragraph break or even a transitional term such as "however" or "but," from sentences about problems with enforcing marijuana laws and about the money to be made by legalizing marijuana to sentences portraying use of marijuana as a stepping stone to use of harder drugs. Readers are left to fend for themselves as they read through these competing and undifferentiated arguments, searching in vain for clues as to Walter’s central point. Interdraft comparisons of other excerpts from Walter’s papers often produce similar results: evidence of major changes, but not necessarily evidence of improvement.

Near the end of an influential article about revision, Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte write, "Successful revision results not from the number of changes a writer makes but from the degree to which revision changes bring a text closer to fitting the demands of a situation" (411). Although one may admire Walter’s attitude toward revision, Walter’s revisions often were not successful according to Faigley and Witte’s criterion. Nevertheless, writers such as Mina Shaughnessy
(Errors 119) and David Bartholomae (20) have suggested that as Basic Writers learn to risk attempting more ambitious discourses, their writing may (perhaps must) temporarily get "worse" before it gets "better," and William Perry has defined a good college teacher as "one who supports in his students a more sustained groping, exploration, and synthesis" (211). From the perspectives of Shaughnessy, Bartholomae, and Perry, Walter's revising practices, although perhaps unsuccessful when short-term results are considered, may be quite promising in terms of his prospects for a long-term education.

Finished Papers, Grades, and Comments

The Finished Papers

The due date for the research papers was the final day of the semester--a few days after the class met for the last time. Most of the students turned in their papers not during the last class session, but a day or two later, dropping by Ms. Gibson's office or leaving the papers in her mailbox. Thus, I was unable to obtain photocopies of most of the papers at the time that they were turned in. Because all graded essays from Basic Writing classes were stored in the community college's Writing Center, I planned to locate the relevant essays after the Writing Center reopened at the beginning of the next semester. However, Writing Center personnel moved the stored papers from one building to another in between semesters, and in the move Sam's paper was evidently lost. According to interviews with Sam and with Ms. Gibson, Sam
managed to work around his inability to find articles praising steroids. He quoted from one source and then disagreed with it, and he quoted brief passages in which two other sources discussed short-term positive effects of steroids, without mentioning that those sources then launched into much longer, more emphatic, sections warning of the long-term dangers of steroids. Other than these few facts and a record of the grade the paper received, very little information was available about Sam's research paper. The other five papers, however, were available for examination.

Although an excerpt cannot take the place of a complete essay, the second paragraph of Ann's paper typifies the entire essay's strengths and limitations:

Malnutrition is caused by a poor diet that lacks certain nutrients. For the body to obtain the right nutrients, it must have a balanced diet. "By standing and observing the check-out counter at supermarkets, a person could tell that not to many people know what makes up a balanced diet(Rodale 16). With children and teens having access to candy and sodas, their diets lack many very important nutrients their body needs while maturing. Malnutrition is something that occurs not only in the poorer economical countries; this is something that can occur in our, so-called healthy, population(32). Therefore, malnutrition may happen to anyone at any age who continues to neglect their body with an unbalanced diet.

In this paragraph, as in the essay as a whole, Ann establishes a clear central point and supports it to create a coherent, unified text. However, not only is Ann simply reporting information from her sources, without adding analysis of her own, but she is also telling most reasonably intelligent adult
readers nothing that they do not already know. In fact, Ann’s thesis statement reads, "Poor nutrition may result in malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies or even disease"--and since "malnutrition" means "faulty or inadequate nutrition," the statement that "poor nutrition may result in malnutrition" conveys little, if any, information to a reader. Given that Ms. Gibson and Ann’s previous Basic Writing teacher had both defined good writing largely in terms of a surface correctness and adherence to formulae for a set number of subtopics, paragraphs, and sentences per paragraph, it seems possible that Ann was not accustomed to thinking of her writing as a vehicle for saying something.

In smaller-scale matters, Ann is more successful. Granted, her prose contains occasional awkward wordings such as the phrase "the poorer economical countries," and she averages almost a dozen errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per typed page. But the errors are often minor, as in the plural pronoun with "anyone," or extremely common errors such as the to/too lapse. Ann’s writing is almost entirely free from most types of highly noticeable errors--sentence fragments, fused sentences, and nonstandard verb forms, for instance--found in the prose of many Basic Writers. Moreover, although her tendency, continued throughout the paper, to provide a quotation mark at the beginning of a quotation, but none at the end, can get confusing at times, Ann’s citations do serve the intended purpose: in the cases in which the
works she cited were available in the library, one finds that
the cited material is, indeed, on the page indicated by the
citation. Overall, the paper indicates that Ann was for the
most part ready to move beyond Basic Writing and into college-
level writing classes—classes where, perhaps, she would be
encouraged to view writing in terms of communication, not
simply in terms of satisfying formulae.

Carol’s paper may be somewhat less encouraging. Despite
working on her ideas through three essays and receiving
extensive individualized help from Ms. Gibson, Carol never
fully synthesizes the article which originally inspired her to
select her topic—a rather lurid account, apparently from
People Magazine, of a mother’s going to jail and sending her
two-year-old daughter into hiding to prevent her ex-husband
from performing sexual acts on the daughter during court-
ordered visitations—with the rest of her paper, a more
general discussion of the causes and effects of child abuse.
Carol’s discussion of the individual case takes up more than
half of the essay and is presented as a dramatic narration,
not as a specific example of broader points made in the rest
of the essay. Yet the introduction and conclusion deal
exclusively with the general problem, not with the specific
cases. Thus, the essay lacks unity.

While one must read the entire essay to see its
structural difficulties, the following excerpt typifies
Carol’s handling of smaller-scale matters:
Eric has been married three times, and had a child with two wives. Both wives had girls, but Eric always wanted a son (Chin 120)." There could have been any number of reasons for Eric's violent behavior. No one really knows, but Hilary and Heather suffers greatly because of their father's abusive behavior. Eric's abusive behavior toward his daughter, Hilary begin seven months after he petition the court for overnight visits.

Although there is little difference between Ann's paper and Carol's in frequency of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar--eleven to twelve per page in both papers--Carol is prone to far more noticeable errors such as the nonstandard verb forms in the quoted passage. Moreover, at times Carol encounters problems with getting her sentences to say what she means, as in the sentence, "Eric has been married three times, and had a child with two wives." Finally, beyond the unusual placement of the quotation mark, with no second quotation mark to establish the other end of the quotation, Carol's parenthetical citation, like all her citations in the paper, serves no practical purpose: her Works Cited page lists three magazine articles, but without exception, the articles do not appear in the magazine issues listed. Thus, the citations do not allow a reader to look up the cited passages.

As discussed already, Melanie's paper is vaguely unified, but only because her thesis--that computers in the workplace have had both positive and negative effects--casts such a wide net. Within this roomy thesis, Melanie juxtaposes seemingly disparate material: for example, a paragraph about the product features extolled in an advertisement for a new model
of computer (positive effect) is followed by a paragraph about computer viruses (negative effect), with no connection between the two other than a sentence stating, "However, not all of the effects are positive." One can, of course, describe the features of a new computer as positive effects of computerization in the workplace, since the features would not be available if computers were not in the workplace; similarly, one can describe computer viruses as a negative effect of computerization in the workplace, since there can be no computer viruses in a place where there are no computers. Nevertheless, Melanie's approach to causes and effects, like her approach to unity of discourse, seems at times rather disconcerting.

In terms of smaller-scale matters, the following excerpt typifies Melanie's paper:

The ability to store data has allowed more space in the office. Storing data has eliminated the paper work of many jobs. The computer's ability to transfer information from terminal to terminal has eliminated a lot of time consuming communications such as the phone and the postal service. Elimination of jobs were inevitable. The loss of many jobs provoked Luddites to become noticed. However, advanced technology jobs have become abundant as the computer generation progresses.

Like Ann, Melanie tends to "inform" readers of things that most reasonably intelligent adults already know. Like Carol, Melanie at times has difficulty saying what she means, as when the third quoted sentence seems to tell readers that computerized companies are no longer equipped with telephones and no longer need postal service. The phrase "provoked
Luddites to become noticed" demonstrates Melanie's already-discussed problem with awkward wordings, a problem which surfaces elsewhere in the paper with the sentence "Morris will result in facing felony charges at the end of the month."
Moreover, the sudden allusion to Luddites (mentioned briefly two paragraphs earlier, where they were described as "19th century employees who destroyed labor-saving machinery, to save their jobs") demonstrates the paper's peculiar juxtaposition of concepts. Melanie's paper, like Ann's and Carol's, contains roughly eleven errors per page in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, including highly noticeable lapses such as "Elimination of jobs were inevitable" and, elsewhere in the paper, "they are" for "there are." ("They are more positive effects than negative ones.") Also, Melanie's citations rarely provide enough accurate information for a reader to find the cited passage in a library.

Walter's problems shaping his rather complex view of legalization of drugs into a unified discourse have already been discussed; unfortunately, the final draft of his research paper leaves those problems largely unsolved. If fact, with each new revision, Walter added more contradictory material—contradictory, that is, because he fails to provide transitional material when shifting from arguments for legalization to arguments against it, and because his introduction and conclusion fail to establish his overall view on the issue. The final 2 1/2 paragraphs of the essay, when
compared with the excerpts from the drafts discussed earlier, demonstrate the expansion of contradictory material and the absence of material establishing an overall perspective:

Law enforcement had to add special teams to its force to handle the Marijuana use. It could have been so easy to put packages of Marijuana cigarettes on a counter and to have sold them and made profit from the sale. The stepping stone to harder drugs could be said to be Marijuana. After that period Cocaine became popular.

Cocaine is commonly referred to as the white horse or angel dust. That drug began its wide spread use with devastating effects. Law enforcement came up with many ideas on how they could control the sale and use of Cocaine. It became apparent that for every one person they arrested for selling drugs, there would be three to take his place. An easier mean would be to make this drug legal; at least the price would be low, and drugs would be pure. The money would be used to help those who became addicted.

Drugs have managed to destroy the minds and bodies of almost every person who come into contact with them. "Whether it is inspired or insane, drug legalization has been the idea of the moment. That in itself shows the intensity of the nation frenzy that has erupted once again to do something--anything--about drugs and related crimes." (12, 13)

If one compares the last three sentences of the next-to-last paragraph with the first sentence of the final paragraph, one gets the sense that Walter is trying to write a persuasive essay, but that at times he is trying to persuade us to favor legalization of drugs while at other times he is trying to persuade us to oppose it. The closing quotation, in turn, suggests that the entire paper has been essentially informative, not persuasive, with no judgment offered as to whether drug legalization is "inspired or insane." Walter’s essay is not an example of unified discourse.
In addition, the paper occasionally contains factual errors, as when Walter claims that "angel dust" refers to cocaine. Walter at times has problems with awkward wordings ("That drug began its widespread use"), and his essay contains about fourteen errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page. While most of the errors are relatively minor, some are highly noticeable, such as fused sentences ("Cocaine has no boundaries it will addict anyone who comes in contact with it") and problems with final "s" in verbs ("such users normally uses," "every person who come") and possessive nouns ("the nation frenzy"). Finally, Walter’s listing of a page number without providing a clue as to which source is being quoted is not exceptional in this paper; only rarely does he provide enough accurate information for a reader to find the cited passage in a library. While one may admire the ambition implicit in Walter’s task definition, reading process, and writing process, Walter’s research paper itself is somewhat disappointing.

As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, one purpose of this study is to test Sandra Stotsky’s theories regarding pre-first-draft writings and the discovery of focus in research papers. Stotsky argues against the first draft as "discovery draft" in research papers, stating that those students who have not found a focus prior to beginning the first draft are likely to encounter considerable difficulty. Stotsky further argues that ideally, the focus should emerge before the
student begins the first draft and that "Categorizing, organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing may be the most significant generative activities in the search process, utterly dependent on a dynamic interaction between thinking and writing" ("On Developing" 207). The Basic Writers' experiences only partly support Stotsky's views. Those students who had difficulty articulating their focuses when interviewed prior to writing the papers did, in fact, encounter difficulty producing focused papers. However, despite an enormous amount of "categorizing, organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing" in a "dynamic interaction between thinking and writing" as the students completed their first two essays prior to writing the research paper, and despite Ms. Gibson's statement that the first two essays allowed the students to "see things more in depth" and to "take a new approach and develop their ideas more fully" on the research paper, the only Basic Writer whose focus emerged during the search process and the writing of the first two essays was Melanie—and her rather vague focus was essentially provided for her by Ms. Gibson during an individual conference. Sam (whose paper was described by Ms. Gibson during her interview as focused) and Ann, because of personal experiences with their topics, had essentially arrived at their focuses as soon as they selected their topics. Carol and Walter, despite the individual attention received by the former and the massive effort expended by the latter, produced
papers lacking in focus.

In the cases of Sam and Walter, one can go further than to say that the focus did not emerge from "interaction between writing and thinking" prior to the writing of the first draft. Far from discovering his focus during his research, Sam clung to his focus in spite of what he found during his research. And the more Walter recategorized and reorganized in a "dynamic interaction between writing and thinking," the more his text practically defied the reader to discern a focus. In short, for the Basic Writers, a dynamic interplay between thinking and writing during the search process was not the key to producing a focused research paper; if a focus emerged at all, it emerged, along with the paper topic, from the writer's previous personal experiences.

Naomi's paper must be considered as a somewhat different entity from the other research papers. True, Naomi's process resembles Ann's and Sam's in that personal experience allowed her to find her paper's focus as soon as she selected her topic. In Naomi's case, however, the personal experience was the experience of having written a paper on the same subject for a previous course. While the other Basic Writers did not simply recopy sections of earlier papers in the three-paper sequence when constructing their research papers, even though they had Ms. Gibson's permission to do so, Naomi appears to have largely recopied the paper she had written for the other class, despite having told Ms. Gibson that she would
substantially rewrite the paper.

Naomi was not available to be interviewed after she had turned in her research paper to Ms. Gibson. During her earlier interview, however, she had stated that she would have to conduct new research in order to cite three magazine articles, as required by Ms. Gibson, rather than citing three books, as she had been required to do in the paper for the other class. But the paper which she turned in to Ms. Gibson cites three books and no magazine articles. Moreover, Naomi was absent for virtually every class session I observed, including all of the sessions which met in the library. In fact, when one class session was divided between a lecture in the regular classroom and subsequent workshop time in the library, Naomi attended the lecture and then left as the other students were heading toward the library.

The format of Naomi’s paper provides further evidence that little or none of the paper was composed for Ms. Gibson’s class. Despite their difficulties with other matters, the other five Basic Writers all produced typed cause-effect papers which scrupulously satisfied Ms. Gibson’s requirements regarding headings, spacing, number of paragraphs, and number of sentences per paragraph. Naomi, too, had adhered to these requirements in her earlier essays in the three-paper sequence, essays written on a topic unrelated to her subject for the research paper. For the research paper, however, Naomi turned in a handwritten essay which contains scarcely
any cause-effect reasoning and in which "required" items such as the course number and the date on the title page, an outline, and Naomi’s name and the page number at the tops of pages are missing. Moreover, no paragraph contains the "required" minimum of six sentences, and only five of the thirteen paragraphs contain more than three sentences. (Even with "extra credit" for compound and complex sentences, many paragraphs fail to reach the minimum.) Finally, in spite of Ms. Gibson’s warnings of severe penalties for a missing period or a misplaced comma on the Works Cited page, Naomi’s list (marked "Bibliography," not "Works Cited") is far removed from standard format. (In fact, Naomi parenthetically cites four different works in her paper, yet lists only three in her bibliography.) When all of these items are considered, it seems almost certain that Naomi did not compose her research paper for Ms. Gibson’s class.

Naomi’s essay is focused, and the prose is freer from awkward wordings and highly noticeable errors than is the prose of any of the other Basic Writers except, perhaps, Ann. Much of the prose, however, is not Naomi’s: over half of the essay consists of word-for-word quotation. Furthermore, more than half the quoted material appears without quotation marks. Roughly 35% of the paper consists of verbatim copying from sources, without quotation marks, mostly in passages of forty or more consecutive words of copying.
In Naomi's defense, the plagiarism may be unintentional: the copied passages are always parenthetically cited, and the citations do, in fact, lead the reader to the source of the plagiarism. Presumably, if Naomi's intentions were dishonest, she would have made it more difficult for the plagiarism to be detected. At any rate, the plagiarism went undetected, just as it presumably was present but undetected previously, when Naomi had turned in much the same research paper in the other class, a college-level, non-remedial class in which Naomi's semester grade was a B+.

The fact that the plagiarism went undetected demonstrates one more way that the paper evidently did not conform to Ms. Gibson's "requirements." Ms. Gibson had required class members to hand in photocopies of cited pages and had said that she always checked a minimum of three citations against the photocopied sources. But eight of the ten cited passages in Naomi's paper are plagiarized. Thus, it appears that either Ms. Gibson did not look at Naomi's photocopied pages or, more likely, Naomi did not hand in the pages.

**Grades and Comments**

As suggested in Chapter One, some readers may conclude that Ms. Gibson graded the papers rather generously. Carol, Melanie, and Walter received A's on their research papers; Ann and Naomi received A-'s; and Sam received a B. Given what has already been stated about Naomi's paper, a considerable discrepancy existed between Ms. Gibson's "requirements," as
she described them both in class and in her interview with me, and her actual grading practices.

Ms. Gibson wrote more extensively on the students' papers than did any of the other three community-college teachers in the sample, averaging close to sixty words of commentary and ten correction symbols per paper. However, the comments at the conclusion of the paper, beside the grade, usually consist of little more than "Very good!", providing little clue as to why Ms. Gibson graded the papers as she did. As mentioned already, her comments during her interview indicated that she regarded the six students as unusually good writers for a Basic Writing class, students who perhaps had not belonged in Basic Writing at all.

While most of Ms. Gibson's written comments deal with specific wordings, some deal with large-scale matters, praising introductions, theses, and conclusions, asking for clearer connections among ideas, suggesting transitions, and referring to ideas encountered in the students' other papers in the three-essay sequence. Thus, Ms. Gibson's comments suggest that she was not interested exclusively in matters of surface correctness.

At times, however, her comments suggest that she still had some difficulty evaluating texts. Some of these difficulties involve rather small-scale matters. For example, one of Walter's sentences reads, "Overdosing, aids, and being caught by the law is not enough of a deterrent to stop the
wide use of cocaine." Ms. Gibson crossed out the word "a" and added an "s" to "deterrent," so that if Walter examined the paper after he returned to school the next semester, he saw a presumably corrected sentence which read, "Overdosing, aids, and being caught by the law is not enough of deterrents to stop the wide use of cocaine." In the margin of another page of Walter’s paper, Ms. Gibson wrote "fragment"--yet the page contains no sentence fragments. And when Ann repeatedly wrote "dificiencies," Ms. Gibson marked the word as misspelled, but when Ann later used a different misspelling, "deficiences," Ms. Gibson wrote, "Correct--check the others."

At other times the difficulties are more large-scale and, perhaps, more serious. For example, at the end of one of Ann’s paragraphs, Ms. Gibson wrote, "In addition, vitamin deficiencies break the body and can result in a lack of nutritional. . . ." (The ellipses points are Ms. Gibson’s.) Evidently, Ms. Gibson was suggesting a transitional sentence linking the subject of Ann’s preceding paragraph--vitamin deficiencies--with the subject of her next paragraph--disease. But in her paper, Ann links disease (specifically cancer) to excess fat, not to vitamin deficiencies. In her desire for a smooth transition, Ms. Gibson had added a sentence which simply did not fit the paper’s meaning. Furthermore, in her comments on one of Ann’s earlier papers in the sequence, Ms. Gibson evidently thought that the paper dealt with causes of poor nutrition, even though the paper in fact dealt
exclusively with the effects of poor nutrition.

Conclusions

Much is encouraging about the Basic Writers' attitudes toward and processes of completing their research papers. While many of the experts discussed in Chapter Two portray students as indifferent to or hostile toward research papers, all of the Basic Writers except Naomi approached the research-paper project enthusiastically, viewing it as an opportunity to learn about their subjects, as well as about researching and writing. Sam, and perhaps Walter as well, defined the task in a much more ambitious way than is characteristic of most college students, according to Schwegler and Shamous. Despite the fact that the research paper was the third straight essay on the same topic for most of the students, most sought responses to their drafts and worked hard at revision, although only Walter attempted large-scale changes during revision. Moreover, while some have suggested that weaker writers are unaware of the rituals surrounding their writing or else use rituals which seem detrimental to good writing, the Basic Writers were aware of their personal rituals and tried to create a favorable environment for their writing, especially when working on the first draft. Sometimes the students even sounded like respected writing theorists, as when Carol discussed what a composition specialist might call "incubation" or when Walter discussed the need for a detached viewpoint during revision. And
afterwards, the Basic Writers seemed to feel good about the research-paper experience and about what they had accomplished. For example, at the end of his final interview, Walter said of the research paper, "It was a very good experience. I learned quite a bit out of it."

Unfortunately, when the focus switches to the actual research papers the students produced, the view becomes less encouraging. Of the five research papers available for examination, none contains much new information for any reasonably intelligent adult reader; only Ann's is fully and satisfactorily focused; all contain far more errors in mechanics than one expects to encounter in college-level writing, and most certain kinds of serious errors which one almost never encounters in writing by "traditional" college students; and only Ann's consistently provides complete and accurate information in citations. On one hand, then, this chapter demonstrates that one should not assume that poor writing reflects poor thinking or lack of effort; on the other hand, this chapter demonstrates that serious thought and effort do not necessarily guarantee good writing.

Similarly, when one examines writing-process instruction, much is encouraging about Ms. Gibson's teaching methods. Her workshop approach, encouraging students to help each other and to seek individual conferences with her throughout their researching and writing processes, seems ideal for helping Basic Writers to complete a relatively complicated writing
project and would surely be approved by most composition theorists. Her linked-essays, incremental approach to the research paper minimized the anxiety levels of students who had never before written a research paper and who lacked a history of success as writers. Moreover, Ms. Gibson had developed a good rapport with most of her students. For example, during an individual conference, Ms. Gibson and Melanie laughed and joked a great deal, yet still managed to complete considerable work. At one point Melanie, laughing, reached out and patted Ms. Gibson on the shoulder. It is rare for a student to feel comfortable enough with her teacher to make such a gesture.

Yet again, when the focus shifts to finished-product concerns, the view becomes less encouraging. Although Sam, Walter, Carol, and perhaps others were struggling to express views which mattered greatly to them, Ms. Gibson defined the finished product in terms of surface appearance and told the students to channel their ideas to conform with arbitrary formulae for numbers of paragraphs and sentences; her answers to students’ questions revealed her unfamiliarity with the very conventions of format which she emphasized as crucial to a paper’s grade; both her reading aloud in class and her written comments on the students’ papers demonstrated her imperfect control of texts, both in terms of sentence-level correctness and in terms of larger elements such as ideas and organization; her grading of the papers suggests that she
ignored the criteria she claimed to use in evaluating student writing; and her very approach to the scheduled class periods suggests her discomfort in a Basic Writing class. Given the daunting obstacles that Basic Writers must overcome to succeed in college, their college does them a serious disservice when it allows them to be taught by individuals operating outside their areas of academic expertise.

In fact, Ms. Gibson’s situation and her response to it raise serious institutional issues regarding the teaching of Basic Writing. Having denied Ms. Gibson tenure in her field of academic expertise but finding it expedient to retain her on the faculty, the college’s leaders apparently sought a relatively harmless spot for her—and chose to place her in front of Basic Writing students. As a novice Basic Writing teacher, Ms. Gibson apparently sought to learn from her more experienced colleagues—and quickly began to require specific numbers of paragraphs per essay and sentences per paragraph, as well as to deduct (or claim to deduct) specific numbers of points for specific kinds of errors. As the comments of not only the Basic Writers but also the First-Year-Composition students who will be discussed in Chapter Five make clear, Ms. Gibson was probably seeking acceptance within the community college’s discourse community for writing instruction when she adopted this approach of reducing written texts to formulae for paragraphs, sentences, and error-points. In Bakhtinian terms, Ms. Gibson’s voice blended with the voices of an entire
chorus of writing teachers at the school.

Three years after the Basic Writing class discussed in this chapter, four of the six students in the sample—all except Carol and Melanie—had passed at least one college-level writing class with a grade of "C" or better. In addition, four of the six—all except Melanie and Sam—were continuing to progress toward college degrees. Ms. Gibson, too, had progressed: she had received tenure as a teacher of Basic Writing. One could interpret these facts as evidence that the students had learned from the Basic Writing class and were now producing satisfactory college-level writing, while Ms. Gibson had also learned from experience and was producing satisfactory writing instruction. More cynically, one could interpret these facts as evidence that the community college’s standards for both writing and writing instruction are less than stringent. In any case, one cannot help admiring the students and Ms. Gibson for their persistent struggles to rewrite themselves as successes when so many societal and institutional voices have attempted to compose them as failures.
CHAPTER V

FIVE STUDENTS COMPOSING RESEARCH PAPERS
IN LITERATURE-CENTERED FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION CLASSES

Introduction

Students who successfully complete the Basic Writing course described in the previous chapter, as well as incoming students with acceptable scores on an ACT or SAT test or on a writing sample, may enroll in the community college’s First-Year Composition classes. Most composition teachers at the community college rely heavily on traditional methods, chiefly lecture and teacher-dominated discussion—what Paulo Freire calls the "banking method," because the teacher attempts to "deposit" knowledge in students, as opposed to encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.

The second semester of First-Year Composition at the community college employs a highly traditional focus for second-semester composition: the study of literature. This chapter, then, focuses on the effects of traditional teaching methods and literary topics on the processes of composition students as they complete research-paper assignments. Because two of the students discussed in this chapter were also writing research papers for a sociology class, the chapter also briefly examines how, in students’ eyes, the task of writing a research paper for an English teacher differs from
the task of writing a paper for a teacher in another discipline. The chapter describes background conditions affecting the students’ work, discusses the students’ processes of completing the assignment, discusses the finished products, and draws conclusions.

Background

The Course

The community college’s second-semester composition course is taken almost exclusively by those students who intend to transfer to four-year colleges and earn bachelor’s degrees. At the time that this study took place, the textbook for the course was a standard anthology for Introduction to Literature courses, containing roughly 1300 pages of short stories, poems, and plays, less than forty pages on writing essays about literature, and nothing about writing essays on any other topics. The school’s English Department members had recently voted almost unanimously to continue using a literature anthology for second-semester composition rather than to adopt another type of textbook. The departmental syllabus suggested which stories, poems, and plays were to be studied during second-semester composition, required a series of short essays involving various genres of literary writing (an essay about symbols, an explication of a poem, etc.) based on the works in the literature anthology, and finally required a research paper using “literary sources.”
literature-based composition, argues that while English teachers must teach composition because of "the service needs of the institution," they should do so "without compromising their own disciplinary commitment"—that is, their commitment to literature. Thus, Roberts argues, composition should be based on literature, so that English teachers may fulfill the "responsibility of English faculty to teach writing while still working within their own area of expertise" (xiv-xv). However, Edward P.J. Corbett has argued against a literature-based approach to composition, claiming that "the seductive power of literature" can become "a distraction from the main objective of a composition course," namely the teaching of the kinds of "utilitarian prose" needed in many college classes and many careers ("Literature" 180). Similarly, Mina Shaughnessy has suggested that the danger that "reading will become a substitute for writing" is especially acute in "programs where teachers of English literature are required, under the exigencies created by open admissions policies, to teach the rudiments of writing but end up teaching literature just the same" (Errors 222). In the open-door community college examined in this study, almost all of the full-time faculty members were trained primarily in literature rather than composition, there was no head of the composition program, and both the Chair of the English Department and the Assistant Dean of Liberal Arts held doctorates specializing in literature. The second semester of First-Year Composition at
the community college seemed an ideal place to assess the claims of Roberts on one hand, and of Corbett and Shaughnessy on the other.

Sample Selection

I wished to observe students in classes taught by experienced, respected professors who practiced the traditional methods that typified the community college’s English department. Two professors who seemed ideal candidates will be identified in this study by the pseudonyms Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan. Dr. Norton was selected in part because Ms. Logan’s only second-semester composition class met at a time when I would be unable to observe. However, despite Dr. Norton’s offering her students extra credit to participate in the study, only two students volunteered, one of whom withdrew from the study within a week. Thus, I asked Ms. Logan to seek volunteers from her class. She did so, also offering the students extra credit to participate. Six students volunteered, two of whom withdrew from the study within the first two weeks. Thus, this chapter follows one student from Dr. Norton’s class and four from Ms. Logan’s class. The three students who withdrew from the study are also occasionally discussed.¹

As was the case throughout the study, students were chosen largely based on their willingness and availability. However, the only volunteer from Dr. Nordquist’s class had a 4.0 GPA, and the only other volunteer I had secured for the
study at that time was a university student completing a senior thesis as part of an honors program. Thus, I feared that I might end up with a sample restricted to outstanding students. I sought to balance the study by asking Ms. Logan to inform her class that while I welcomed all volunteers, I especially sought those who did not particularly like English or research papers and who tended to procrastinate a bit on writing assignments. The signup sheet came back with names, phone numbers, and messages such as, "I hate English and research papers. I will put it off until the last minute" and "How I feel about English? I’d rather eat bees." In seeking to balance my sample for the study as a whole, I undoubtedly created a biased sample from Ms. Logan’s class, and this bias undeniably limits the extent to which results from this chapter may be applied to other teaching situations.

Nevertheless, the sample’s bias should not be exaggerated. Whatever their limits in attitude, all four students from Ms. Logan’s class had ability: as Table 4 demonstrates, their composite ACT scores range from about average to well above average. Although all four have English subscores lower than their composite scores (a finding which may partially explain their lack of enthusiasm for English and research papers), their mean English subscores, as a group, are about the national average. While three of the four were C or C+ students, the fourth had an 3.7 GPA, as well as outstanding ACT scores. Even the three students who withdrew
from the study but who will be quoted occasionally were all competent students, having combined for two B’s and a C+ in their previous composition classes. When one adds Jacki, the 4.0 student from Dr. Norton’s class, the group becomes considerably more impressive.

Two of the students were also assigned a research paper in a sociology class taught by a professor who will be identified in this study by the pseudonym of Dr. McDaniel. This chapter will also deal briefly with these students’ processes of completing that assignment.

Data Collection

I observed Dr. Norton’s class and took notes through the fifth week of the semester, at which point the one student I was observing in that class had completed all but the proofreading and editing of her research paper. I returned for one other class session, during the semester’s eighth week, because that session was devoted to summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and citing. I also attended the library orientation for Dr. Norton’s class.

Scheduling conflicts prevented me from attending classes taught by Ms. Logan or Dr. McDaniel. However, I later observed Ms. Logan teaching another section of second-semester composition, and I also observed and took notes when one of the students in the sample met with Ms. Logan in her office to discuss the student’s progress on the research paper.
If this chapter of the study lacks sufficient classroom-observation data, extensive interview data partly compensate for the deficiency. Because the composition-class research papers were assigned months before the due date, the students were available for a series of interviews over considerable time. All five students were individually interviewed at least five times, with the initial interviews taking place while the students were still considering possible topics and the final interviews taking place after the completed papers had been graded and returned. Of the 31 total interviews with the five students, 24 were audiotaped, with the remaining seven reconstructed from notes. The three students who withdrew from the study all had been interviewed once or twice on audiotape, as well. The three teachers were interviewed after the research papers had been graded and returned, and Ms. Logan was also interviewed earlier, before the papers were handed in. Finally, the interviews with the community college’s four full-time librarians, mentioned in Chapter Three, are used more extensively in this portion of the study than in any other. All interviews with the teachers and librarians were audiotaped.

One of the students in the sample did not complete his research paper. However, the other four students all provided photocopies of their final drafts, including their teachers’ grades and written comments. In addition, three of the students provided photocopies of their rough drafts, including
one who provided copies of multiple drafts; all four provided photocopies or originals of their notes from reading their sources; two provided copies of outlines they wrote while planning the paper; two provided printouts from the library's computerized card catalogue; one provided a small, single-source essay he had completed earlier in the semester as preparation for the research paper; and two provided photocopies of research papers they had written during their previous semester of First-Year Composition. The three teachers also provided all research-paper-related handouts they used during the semester.

The Students

Basic information about the students, all of whom are Caucasians (as are all teachers discussed in this chapter), is provided in Table 4 on page 199.

Greg seemed intent on coming across as comically indifferent to assignments. Judith Goetz and Margaret LeCompte state that when students are aware that they are being observed for publication, they may attempt to "make good copy" by "basing their behavior on popular television programs" (97), and Greg at times seemed to be imitating the wacky sidekick found in many teen comedies. However, every claim he made that could be checked turned out to be accurate: his high ACT scores, his low GPA, his court appearance for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. "One thing you'll learn from studying me is that I worry about nothing," he
Table 4
SECOND-SEMESTER COMPOSITION STUDENTS
(COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>College GPA</th>
<th>Composite Score--ACT</th>
<th>English Subscore--ACT</th>
<th>Father's Education</th>
<th>Mother's Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ms. Logan Dr. McDaniel</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>24 (Approx. 80th percentile)</td>
<td>22 (Approx. 70th percentile)</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacki</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Dr. Norton Dr. McDaniel</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ms. Logan</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>20 (Approx. 60th percentile)</td>
<td>17 (Approx. 40th percentile)</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ms. Logan</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>19 (Just over 50th percentile)</td>
<td>13 (Approx. 20th percentile)</td>
<td>1 yr. college</td>
<td>2 yrs. college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ms. Logan</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>27 (Approx. 90th percentile)</td>
<td>22 (Approx. 70th percentile)</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These students took the ACT test prior to the creation of the "enhanced" ACT near the end of the 1980's. The average score on the older form of the ACT that these students took was about two points lower than the average score on ACT tests given in the 1990's.*
said. "Absolutely nothing." As a high school student, however, he had been hospitalized because of severe stomach pains, pains which had turned out to be tension-related. Near the end of his final interview, Greg said, "I could be really good if I tried," and this comment may explain much of Greg's behavior. By conspicuously not trying, he could avoid pressure to achieve while retaining the belief that he could achieve if he so desired.

Jacki, a 4.0 student, was described by Dr. Norton as "effervescent" in class. She was an active, enthusiastic, and insightful participant in class discussions, even though English composition was not closely related to her mathematics major. Outside of class, she was active in social and political groups on campus. She combined perfectionist standards for completed work with a determination to complete that work far before deadlines; during interviews she cheerfully referred to what she called her "obsessive-compulsive behavior" regarding classwork. She fit the classic profile for an honors student at the community college: a woman, older than traditional college students, who had spent a large portion of her twenties regretting not having gone to college and who had learned what she didn't want to do with her life. Viewing college as a second chance in life, she devoured her education. The year after she participated in this study, Jacki graduated from the community college with her 4.0 GPA intact, the recipient of an award given annually
to the college's most outstanding all-around student.

Joe described himself on the volunteer signup sheet as "a world famous procrastinator." His parents had divorced when he was seven, after which he rarely saw his father, while his mother had worked 65 hours per week. As a result, he said, "From the time I was eight years old I basically raised myself." A nineteen-year-old who had held and lost 40 different jobs since he was sixteen, Joe had a very low self-image. "I hate English, and I'm terrible at math, so I guess I'm really a lost cause," he said during his final interview. The research-paper assignment worried him because, he said, "I feel I need some definite supervision, but a research paper you have to do all on your own."

Larry was probably the most passive student in this study, wanting teachers to tell him exactly what to do, or better yet, to do things for him. He viewed the composition class, and in fact almost all classes outside his business major, as burdens to be tolerated stoically.

Ralph, like Joe, described himself as a procrastinator, saying he had put off all work on his research paper in first-semester composition until the week it was due. However, his grade-point average and ACT scores indicate that he was a highly capable student with a history of academic success.

Obviously, this is a highly varied group. Yet in some ways they come from backgrounds less diverse than those described in any other chapter of this study. All described
their parents as high school graduates, and all except Ralph described their parents as having had little or no formal education beyond high school. Again with the exception of Ralph, who said that his father stressed the value of doing well in school until Ralph internalized this particular value himself, the students described receiving few or no parental messages encouraging them to get an education. Joe described himself as largely left alone by his parents, other than an occasional "Why can’t you get good grades like your sister does?" Greg, explaining his attitude toward classes and life in general, said, "My daddy used to tell me, 'Don’t worry about nothing until a problem comes up.' One time I asked him, 'How will I know when it’s a real problem?’ And he said, 'I don’t know. I ain’t never had one yet.'" In Bakhtinian terms, when the students tried to find their own voices while writing essays, most had to contend with voices from their upbringing, voices which implied that education was not particularly important.

Not surprisingly, the students generally saw themselves as having gotten by in high school without exerting any real effort. "I made honors in high school without taking home even a day of homework," Jacki said. "That tells you what kind of academic pressure was put on us. Literally none." (Two more honors students who will be discussed in Chapter Seven, Kari and Martin, made statements almost identical to Jacki’s regarding high school.) Larry, describing himself as
"a B/C" student" in high school, said, "I didn’t really care. The teachers just let you slip by, and then when you get out, you have to catch up in everything. I mean, I did fine in English until I got to college, then boom!" Greg stated, "I pretty much slept through high school. It was pretty easy for me."

Joe, the only one to report having gotten low grades in high school, said that he went beyond simply not trying:

I skipped school all the time. I ran around with a bunch of little thugs. And when I was there, I was disruptive in class. Also, I slept a lot during first and second periods. The rest of the day, I sat there and doodled. You could fill thousands of notebooks with the doodles I’ve done in class.

Most of the students showed little enthusiasm for reading. Joe, hyperactive as a child and troubled with letter reversals, said,

I never read, really. I hardly ever read my textbooks for my classes. If I just attend class and listen to what the teacher says, that’s enough, and I do fine. But if I miss class, I’m in trouble, because I can’t get the information any other way.

Ralph, although an honors student, said that whenever he had been assigned a book to read in high school English, he had gotten by through paying attention in class and reading Cliff’s Notes. "I find it real hard for me to read," he said. "In my entire life, I’ve only read one book—thick book, not something like Dr. Seuss—outside of reading for class." Greg put it more colorfully: "I stay too busy to read, you know? Good old rock’n’roll music keeps me away." Obviously, this aversion to reading did not increase the students’ chances for
success on a paper which not only would require library research, but would also have to deal with a literary topic.

Most of the students also expressed negative attitudes toward the work involved in completing a research paper. "It's just a pain, going to the library, taking notes, typing," Larry said. "It seems like every semester you've got to do one for some English class. It's just a hassle." Greg stated that he disliked "the time you've got to put in on them," and Joe said, "They certainly don't provide much short-term gratification." Ralph, during his first interview, said, "I know I need to get started [on the paper], but I just dread doing it."

Jacki was the one exception in her attitude toward reading and toward research papers. Although she repeatedly stated that she lacked experience reading the kinds of literature found in the course anthology and although she disliked almost all pre-twentieth-century literature she had encountered, she did like some of the contemporary literature in the textbook, and she did occasionally read nonfiction books and magazines for pleasure. She also preferred the research-paper assignment over the other graded assignments in the literature-centered composition class because she felt that the other assignments, essays of literary analysis, were graded in "completely subjective" ways.

Compared to the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four, the five students discussed here were old hands at writing
research papers. Three of the five, Joe, Greg and Ralph, had written research papers in high school. Joe and Greg had completed only one research paper apiece, while Ralph had completed four, two for English and two for biology, in high school. All five had completed research papers for first-semester composition at the community college. Jacki and Ralph had received A’s on these papers, Joe a C, Larry a D-, and Greg could not remember his grade. These first-semester composition papers were the only college research papers previously completed by Jacki and Joe, while Larry, Greg, and Ralph had each completed one other research paper at the community college, in Basic Writing, history, and psychology, respectively. Thus, although all five students had completed research papers before, only Ralph and Greg had completed more than two, and Jacki had completed only one. Of the five students, only Jacki and Ralph reported having been very successful with previous research papers. Thus, the students’ textual voices would be influenced by voices of previous teachers who had provided them with research-paper instruction, but who, in many cases, had judged their efforts on previous research papers rather negatively.

Finally, the students varied in terms of time available for schoolwork, as Table 4 demonstrates. Most, however, were busy, taking 12 to 15 hours of classes and working at least 20 hours per week.
Teachers and Teaching Methods

The three teachers, all tenured and highly influential within the community college, had a combined total of 78 years' experience in education, as teachers or college administrators.

Before coming to the community college, Dr. Norton had chaired the English Department at another school and had taught at a university with highly selective admissions, as well as in gifted-student programs in the public schools. During her interview, she repeatedly compared unfavorably the open-door community college's students with students she had formerly taught. She stated that although Jacki was an outstanding student for the community college, "She would only get in at the bottom level at some schools where I've taught. But here--well, I have to teach the students in my composition classes here fourth-grade grammar." Nor did she attempt to hide such attitudes from her students in class. After a student attempted to answer a question on the first day of the semester, Dr. Norton replied, "I'm not going to repeat that, Deborah, because it's so wrong." On another occasion, she replied to a student's question by asking the class, "Are all of you as dumb about this as John is?" After describing the class's first set of papers as "horribly bad" and having class members rewrite their papers, Dr. Norton had stated, "I want your old copy with your new one. I want your junky, rotten, F-minus first paper." Rarely did a class period go by without
similar comments. Many, but not all, of the students reacted to these comments with amusement, apparently interpreting the comments as at least partly facetious. However, the classroom tone may have been one reason that Dr. Norton’s class produced fewer volunteers than did any other class in this study, since students might be reluctant to discuss Dr. Norton with a researcher whom they knew to be another English teacher, one who had been introduced to them through Dr. Norton.

At the end of the semester described in this study, the Assistant Dean for Liberal Arts named Dr. Norton as the division’s nominee for the community college’s Teacher of the Year award. A year later, the faculty elected Dr. Norton president of the faculty senate.

Ms. Logan, who had at one time chaired the community college’s English Department, contrasted with Dr. Norton in that she was known to be a nurturer of students, particularly marginal students. Despite their contrasting attitudes toward students, however, both used similar teaching methods in second-semester composition, relying heavily on lectures and carefully channeled discussions.

Given the textbook and the course syllabus, both Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan had to decide how much class time to allot to composition and how much class time to allot to literary analysis. Dr. Nordquist assigned stories, poems, and plays, but then stressed that although she would like to discuss these literary works, she could not do so because this
was a composition class rather than a literature class. However, the students’ course grade was determined largely by the almost-weekly short essays they wrote analyzing themes in the stories, explicating the poems, and so forth. Therefore, Dr. Norton lectured about theme, character, etc., in literature in general, displaying a thorough literary background but only briefly alluding to the works she had assigned, the ones about which the students were to write. She also lectured about the literary terms found in the glossary at the back of the book, preparing students for weekly glossary tests.

Ms. Logan chose to devote most class time to analyzing the stories, poems, and plays in the textbook. "You can’t expect them to write about a genre when they know nothing about it," she explained, when interviewed. "You have to teach it first." At the time that they handed in research papers, during the semester’s eleventh week, Ms. Logan’s students had completed only two graded essays—a five-paragraph theme about a short story and a 200-word essay about a poem. The students would write one more short essay, this one about a play, before the semester ended. They were also required to keep journals reacting to their readings and their class discussions.

Despite the struggle to fit both literature and composition into the class, both Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan found time to teach research-paper skills. Both provided
lists of suggested paper topics and went over those suggested topics in class; both set aside one class period for a librarian to provide library orientation; both warned about plagiarism, with Ms. Logan providing a handout on the subject; and both assigned small, graded writings involving paraphrasing and citation prior to the research paper. In fact, Ms. Logan's paraphrase-and-citation exercise, in which students were provided with four articles about poetry and were required to cite any one of those articles in a 200-word essay, served as her class's poetry paper.

Dr. McDaniel, the sociology teacher, took a more casual approach to the research-paper assignment than did Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan. During interviews, both Dr. McDaniel and his students stated that he provided no research-paper instruction beyond specifying the due date, range of acceptable topics, length, and minimum number of sources. "I tell them the format and suggest that they get assistance from the English teachers and the Writing Lab and so forth," he said. "But as far as showing them how to go through all of it and write the paper, I don't. I pretty much just assign it."

The Assignment

Ms. Logan required her students to write a research paper of 1200 to 1500 words, citing four to six sources and dealing with a literary topic. Dr. Norton was somewhat inconsistent as to what she had assigned: although her syllabus called for a 2000-word paper, in class she stated that her syllabus
called for a 1000-to-1500-word paper, and later she said that the paper should be between 1000 and 2000 words. She also handed out a list of suggested topics, all of them literary, but later stated that students could write on nonliterary topics if they preferred. She was consistent, however, about stating that class members had to use "at least three good sources." Dr. McDaniel required that the students write a five-page typed paper dealing with any social problem in America and citing at least four sources.

Both Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton presented the research-paper assignment as something students would complete gradually over an extended period. Both handed out lists of acceptable paper topics and a schedule for preliminary deadlines roughly ten weeks before the papers were due and both arranged for library orientations to take place roughly eight weeks before the papers were due. Ms. Logan required her students to specify their paper topics over six weeks before the papers were due, Dr. Norton almost nine weeks before the papers were due; Ms. Logan set the deadline for research to be completed at almost four weeks before the papers were due, Dr. Norton at six weeks before the papers were due; Ms. Logan required preliminary outlines to be turned in three weeks before the papers were due, Dr. Norton six weeks before the papers were due. Ms. Logan recommended that students come to her office for conferences, bringing completed rough drafts, beginning almost three weeks before
the papers were due, while Dr. Norton set the deadline for rough drafts to be completed at over two weeks before the papers were due. Most students discussed in this chapter did not come close to meeting these deadlines. Jacki, however, completed all parts of the assignment well ahead of the deadlines.

**Topic Lists**

Both Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton handed out topic lists on the first day that they discussed the research papers, more than two months before the completed papers were due. Thus, the lists almost certainly provided the students with their first notions of what topics would be acceptable for the assignment. Both teachers allowed students to write on topics other than those on the lists, and Dr. Norton did not require that these alternative topics deal with literature. However, the required dates for clearing an alternative topic with the teacher--nine weeks before the paper’s due date for Dr. Norton, over six weeks before the due date for Ms. Logan--assured that many students, especially weaker students who tend to procrastinate, would select topics from the teachers’ lists. Because they turned out to be extremely influential in the research-paper experiences of most of the students discussed in this chapter, the topics on the lists deserve to be named in their entirety.
Dr. Norton listed the following topics:

--Stream of Consciousness (Refer to William Faulkner or James Joyce)
--Sprung Rhythm (Refer to G.M. Hopkins and/or Dylan Thomas)
--Characteristics of the Literary Epic
--Comparison of the Literary Epic and the Folk Epic
--The Dramatic Monologue
--Physical Characteristics of the Greek Theater
--Themes in Greek Drama
--Euripides the Psychologist
--Themes in the Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe
--Characteristic [sic] of the Poetry of Dylan Thomas
--Imagery in _________
--Sonnet Sequences
--Prominent Themes in the Writings of George Bernard Shaw
--Comparisons of the Creation Flood Story in Western Literature
--A Comparison of a Universal Theme as Handled by Two Writers
--Characteristics of Romantic Literature
--Folk Motifs in the Writings of _________
--Characteristics of the Folk Ballad
--Characteristics of Victorian Literature

Ms. Logan listed the following topics:

--Shakespeare’s Use of Soliloquy
--Iago: The Ultimate Villian [sic]
--Psychological Realism in Dostoyevsky’s Novels
--The Revolutionary Nature of Langston Hughes
--The Birth of Frankenstein
--The Women in Poe’s Life
--Realism in Flaubert’s Madame Bovary
--Influences on Flannery O’Connor’s Writing
--Flannery O’Connor and the Grotesque Character
--The Chronicles of Narnia: A Christian Allegory
--How the Beatles and Their Music Affected Society
--Kate Chopin: A Woman Ahead of Her Times
--The Poetry of Anne Bradstreet
--Critical Background of "Kubla Khan"
--Browning’s Dramatic Monologue
--Walt Whitman as the Poet of Democracy
--Chekhov as Social Critic
--The Influences on Emily Dickenson’s [sic] Writings
--The Harlem Renaissance
--The Birth of the Blues
--Hemingway’s Treatment of Women
--Faulkner’s Created County
--Oracles and Prophecies in the Epics
--The Position/Condition of Women in Homer’s Society
Ms. Logan said that the reason she provided the list and required any deviations from the list to be cleared with her at least six weeks before the paper's due date was "just to steer them away from trying to write about things they can't handle, like the use of half-rhyme in something." Similarly, Dr. Norton said that although topics not on the list had to be cleared with her at least nine weeks before the paper's due date, "I usually let them do pretty much what they want unless my instinct tells me it's a topic that they just can't handle. Sometimes they'll give me a topic that I'll know is something a college freshman can't handle." The topic lists, she said, helped to steer students away from such topics. Given that the lists contain such topics as "Shakespeare's Use of Soliloquy," "Sprung Rhythm (Refer to G.M. Hopkins and/or Dylan Thomas)," and "Stream of Consciousness (Refer to William Faulkner or James Joyce)," it seems remarkable that the teachers portrayed the lists as protection for the students against overly difficult topics.

When she handed out her topic list to the class, Dr. Norton stated that the topics were geared to the students' varied interests and majors. "'Euripides the Psychologist'—that's a good topic," she said. "I thought some of you might be majoring in psychology. 'Prominent Themes in the Writings of George Bernard Shaw'—those of you in sociology might like that one." When interviewed, she said of her topic lists, "I change them every time. I slant it differently, thinking
about what sort of things these students will be interested in." Ms. Logan also stated, when interviewed, that she chose the topics on her lists with an eye toward students' varied interests and ability levels.

During interviews, the community college's reference librarians stated that Dr. Norton's and Ms. Logan's lists were not dramatically different from the lists of suggested topics most of the college's English teachers provided for their students in second-semester composition. As veterans of many first-hand encounters with students researching such topics, the community college's reference librarians viewed the lists from a much different perspective than the teachers did. "If English teachers saw how students viewed some of their suggested paper topics, they might be appalled," the librarian whose pseudonym in this study is Kathy Reed said. "Those topics sound good on paper, but they can be very hard to research. And a lot of times the students just don't understand what the teacher wants because they don't have the background that the teacher does."

Ms. Reed's point is demonstrated by the experiences of Marcia, a student who originally volunteered for the study but later withdrew from it. Marcia chose "The Women in Poe's Life" from Ms. Logan's topic list, but almost immediately became confused: Ms. Logan had emphasized that the paper should not be purely a biography, but Marcia could imagine no approach to "The Women in Poe's Life" other than to provide
biographical facts involving Poe and various women. Only during a conference with Ms. Logan did Marcia learn that the real topic was "The women in Poe's life as they influenced Poe's writing and as Poe portrayed them in his writing." Because of their expertise with literature and literary research, many college English teachers would automatically interpret the topic "The Women in Poe's Life" as Ms. Logan intended; but first-year community college students, lacking that expertise, are likely to interpret the topic as Marcia did, and many would lack the initiative to ask the teacher for clarification.

Another reference librarian, referred to in this study as Patricia Gates, discussed the topic lists more bluntly than Kathy Reed had done. Looking over copies of Dr. Norton's and Ms. Logan's topic lists, she said,

> How an English teacher, or any teacher, can expect--I don't know how you [English teachers] get anything out of students with these topics. We have to find this information for them, and when they come to us with these lists, we just groan inside when we see the topic they've chosen.

Of the librarians interviewed for this dissertation, three worked extensively as reference librarians for the community college. All three reference librarians agreed that, ideally, topic lists could help composition students required to write on literary topics, because those students often lacked the literary background to frame their own topics. However, all three emphatically stated that the topics actually provided--by the school's English faculty in general, not only by Dr.
Norton and Ms. Logan—demonstrated the teachers’ insensitivity toward students’ perspectives and abilities. In fact, when I closed the interviews by asking, "Is there anything you’d like to add?", all three, in separate interviews, immediately responded by repeating their earlier assertions that English teachers needed to be more "realistic" in their literary-topic suggestions.

But the most emphatic criticism of the topic lists came from a study participant who demanded total anonymity for this particular quotation, even beyond the pseudonyms used throughout this dissertation. This person said,

I think many of the English teachers here are frustrated by being here. They want to teach literature, but they can’t do that here. When I see these lists of topics, I want to tell the teacher, "[Students] don’t know what these terms mean." Sometimes we’ll pass these lists around just for laughs, like, "Look what they’re asking [students] to write about now." I think some teachers make up those lists to show off what they know about literature, not to help [students].

This quotation supports Shaughnessy’s view, quoted earlier, that problems can result in open-enrollment institutions in which teachers of literature "are required . . . to teach the rudiments of writing but end up teaching literature all the same" (Errors 222).

In fact, the topic lists suggest a possible problem with Roberts’s assertion that requiring composition students to write their essays about literature improves composition instruction by allowing English faculty "to teach writing while still working within their own area of expertise" (xiv).
It may well have been precisely because their area of expertise was literature that Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan viewed the topics on their lists as reasonable, even inviting. Their love of literature may have prevented them from noticing that given the discipline-specific nature of research, the skills their students acquired in researching these topics might have limited applicability to those students’ fields of academic interest. Because they were members of the discourse community of literary theorists and scholars, Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan may not have been fully aware that their topics required their students to become apprentice members of a discourse community that most of them neither understood nor wished to join. By focusing the composition-class writing assignment within their own area of expertise, Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan may have unwittingly ended up exercising the "cultural hegemony" that, according to Patricia Bizzell, "can be seen in the treatment of one community’s discourse conventions as if they simply mirrored reality" (238).

Teachers’ Task Representations

Although some of the topics on the lists seem to call for not only technical literary expertise but also original analysis, Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton both defined their students’ task largely as producing an informational report—the rather unambitious approach which, according to Schwegler and Shamoan, typifies most students’, but not most teachers’, definitions of the research-paper task.
Ms. Logan acknowledged that her definition of the assignment as an informative report was rooted in a pessimistic view of students' abilities. Although she stated that she required a thesis and forbade "mere biography," she added:

I don't expect the papers to have a lot of original insight, because I don't teach it from the standpoint that they have to do that. My experience is that when I ask our students to do critical analysis, they just can't do it. Everything becomes plagiarized—and I mean everything. So I tell them, "If you have some ideas, some feelings about the topic and you want to work them into the conclusion, that's fine, but I don't necessarily expect that."

Dr. McDaniel, the sociology teacher, defined the research-paper task in much the same way that Ms. Logan did. "I want their opinions somewhat minimized, mostly restricted to the conclusion, with the bulk of the paper factual information from their sources."

For Ms. Logan, however, the modest task representation appeared to stem in part from the literary-topic requirement: one reason that Ms. Logan assumed that her students might not have "some ideas, some feelings about the topic" was that she also assumed that her students would not read any of the literature about which they were writing. "I tell them to go to Masterplots so they can get some idea of what these works are about," she said. This explains why Ms. Logan did not encourage the students to attempt "critical analysis": it is difficult to analyze a work one has not read. Yet by encouraging the students to write informative reports about
literary works but not encouraging the students to read the works, works which she herself had read, Ms. Logan was in effect telling the students, "You must write about texts you have not read in order to inform a reader who has read those texts." What Peter Elbow has written about most discourse written for teacher-as-examiner was particularly true for this assignment: the assignment involved "swimming against the stream of natural communication" (219).

Dr. Norton went even further in the task purely as an informative report: she implied to the students that if they did have any original ideas about their topics, those ideas were irrelevant. "Remember, you’re not trying to find something new on your own," she told the class. "You’re relying on what somebody else has said, because you aren’t the authorities on your topic. This is the essence of education: being able to find information and use it." When she had class members summarize a William F. Buckley article about cultural illiteracy, an exercise intended to prepare them for the research paper, Dr. Norton said, "Now when you write, don’t tell me what you think. Tell me what Buckley thinks. Remember, in this course you’re supposed to write about what you read." In contrast to reader-response theorists, Dr. Norton appeared to have transplanted what Freire calls the "banking method" from the classroom to the library: just as she viewed students largely as passive recipients of a teacher’s perspectives and information, so she evidently
Criteria for Grading

When asked about their criteria for grading papers, both Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton replied in remarkably similar ways, stating that they looked for a clear, well-organized thesis; organization, which both described by using the phrase "a beginning, a middle, and an end"; and citation format. Ms. Logan also stressed a neat manuscript, saying, "It's like Mama used to tell me: 'You always behave better when you dress up.'"

Both English teachers also stressed spelling, punctuation, and grammar as criteria for grading. More specifically, both stated that they deducted a specific numbers of points for specific kinds of errors, in accordance with the English Department's standardized scale for deducting points for errors. (The scale is reproduced as Appendix A on page 681.) Unlike the Basic Writers' papers graded by Ms. Gibson and discussed in Chapter Four, the composition students' graded papers demonstrated that Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton did, in fact, adhere to the standardized point deductions to some degree.

Nevertheless, both English teachers expressed reservations toward the standardized scale. Ms. Logan tried to offset the potentially punitive tone of the scale, but like Ms. Gibson in Chapter Four, she seemed to feel guilty about her generosity. "Sometimes, if they have grammatical mistakes but the writing is really good, especially if the problems are
her generosity. "Sometimes, if they have grammatical mistakes but the writing is really good, especially if the problems are just things like omitted or superfluous commas, I’ll add some extra points for content," she said. "That’s very subjective, though."

Dr. Norton, in contrast, seemed concerned that the department’s scale was not strict enough. When she handed out a copy of the scale in class, she said, "Before I came here, I taught in a school where one sentence fragment meant an automatic F and three misspelled words meant an automatic F. And that was a high school. But this is a community college, not a university, and we must make allowances." Given that Dr. Norton had been department chair at the high school, she presumably helped create and/or enforce the stricter policy.

When interviewed, however, Dr. Norton stated that she did not enforce certain parts of the English Department’s grading scale—notably, the part dealing with the handling of ideas, rather than with matters of surface correctness, adding:

The part that says up to fifty points for structure and organization, for instance—very seldom do I get into that, because we just don’t have—half my students would have minus fifty. I just give them this grading scale so they’ll have it in their brain cells to tell them that we do have some kind of technical standards at this school.

In contrast, Dr. McDaniel stated that other than requiring citations, he graded exclusively for content, unless students "have really messed up grammatically [sic]," in which case, "I’ll have them to redo it." Dr. McDaniel added that
recently he had not received as many papers with severe grammatical problems as he had in the past. Asked to explain the improvement, he replied, "I'm not for sure but what [sic] our Basic Writing program isn't helping out significantly."

In short, when the students produced their research papers, their textual voices would inevitably be influenced by the voices of Dr. Norton, Ms. Logan, and Dr. McDaniel, as well as by a wider range of teacherly "voices" whose influence could be detected in such matters as the English Department's standardized point deductions for errors and the custom of providing lists of advanced literary topics for the composition students' research papers. Topic, length of discourse, number of sources, task representation, attitude toward spelling, punctuation, and grammar—in all of these matters, to paraphrase Bakhtin, the students' thoughts were inevitably born and shaped partly in reaction to their teachers' thoughts.

The Research-Paper Processes

Topic Selection

As a group, the students did not respond to the topics with enthusiasm. Almost immediately after Dr. Norton handed out her list to the class, one bold student, not part of the sample, asked, "Why do English teachers always give us these dumb topics? What we have to write on is weird. I mean, this stuff is only good for the answer to a Jeopardy question. Why can't we write on what we're majoring in?" Most of the
students, however, accepted the lists quietly. As the student’s reference to "English teachers always giv[ing] us these dumb topics" implies and as the reference librarians stated, most of the community college’s teachers of second-semester composition employed similar lists. Thus, just as the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four seemed to accept requirements of specified numbers of paragraphs per essay and sentence per paragraph as standard procedure in writing classes, so the second-semester composition students seemed to accept the topics as standard procedure in a class which, despite its official title, many referred to as their "lit class."

Faced with the alternative of framing their own literature-based topics and getting those topics approved more than six weeks before the paper was due, most of the students in the sample simply selected a topic from the list. Or rather, in some cases, they asked Ms. Logan to select one for them. "I talked to her after class," Joe said. "I have an interest in music, so she chose the Beatles."

Larry also stated that he was interested in music, but chose not to write about the Beatles, saying by way of explanation, "I don’t like older music." Asked why he had chosen "Hemingway’s Treatment of Women" from the list, Larry replied that Ms. Logan had selected the topic for him. "I’m not interested in it really, but she said it’d be an easy one," he said. "If there was an easier one than that, I
would've taken it."

Even when students made their own choices from the list, their selection process was severely restricted. Marcia, mentioned earlier as having chosen "The women in Poe's Life," selected that topic largely because Poe was one of only two authors on the 25-topic list whose names she recognized. And Greg chose "Iago: The Ultimate Villian [sic]" from the list because, he said, "It sounds kinda wild." He had no idea who Iago was, and in fact pronounced the Shakespearean character's name "I-go" throughout his first interview after selecting his topic.

Among Ms. Logan's students in the sample, only Ralph selected a topic from outside the list. He had recently seen a stage production of the musical Les Miserables (called Les Mis from now on in order to distinguish it from the novel Les Miserables) and sought to write about the play. However, eventually concluding that he would be unable to satisfy the paper's literature-based requirement if he wrote exclusively about the musical play, Ralph ended up writing a more general paper about Victor Hugo, author of the novel Les Miserables.

Viewing herself as being in a "catch-up situation" regarding literary knowledge, Jacki rejected Dr. Norton's list of topics almost immediately. As soon as Dr. Norton had finished going over the topic list, Jacki asked if she could write about Spalding Gray's Swimming to Cambodia, which she described as "a kind of a dramatic monologue." Then, when the
class period ended, Jacki approached Dr. Norton to ask if she
could write on a wholly nonliterary topic—chlorofluorocarbons
as a threat to the ozone layer. Dr. Norton approved both the
Swimming to Cambodia suggestion and the ozone-layer
suggestion.

Interviewed later, Dr. Norton said that nonliterary
topics had been acceptable from the beginning and that she
always allowed second-semester composition students to write
on nonliterary topics if they wished. Until Jacki came up
after class and asked, however, Dr. Norton had not mentioned
nonliterary topics to her students. In fact, when the student
quoted earlier had described the listed topics as "weird" and
asked, "Why can’t we write about what we’re majoring in?", Dr.
Norton had not stated that students could write about other
topics, but rather had defended her list. Conceivably, Dr.
Norton’s acceptance of nonliterary topics may have been based
on her desire to please Jacki, an unusually bright, outgoing
student who improved the class atmosphere enormously and was
at times almost the only one besides Dr. Norton to participate
in class discussions. At any rate, once she had allowed Jacki
to write on a nonliterary topic, Dr. Norton informed the other
students in the class that they had the same freedom.

Given their attitudes toward research papers, some of
students might have remained indifferent to the assignment
regardless of the range of possible topics. For example, in
first-semester composition, Larry’s teacher had encouraged
students to choose whatever topic interested them, yet Larry acknowledged that he was not particularly interested in the topic he had chosen, AIDS. Asked why he had chosen this topic, Larry said, "I figured there'd be enough sources, and I figured it'd be the easy thing. I could've written on something I was interested in, but I'm not really interested in all that much." Asked what topic he might choose purely for interest, Larry paused for over fifteen seconds before replying, "Maybe something about music," then paused another ten seconds before adding, "Or maybe something about sports." Asked to specify a topic about music that would interest him, Larry paused about ten seconds and then said, "Probably who was the best guitar player or something like that. Jimi Hendrix or Eddie Van Halen, something like that." Larry may well be doomed to unpleasant experiences with research papers regardless of any topic restrictions.

Nor would the literary-topic requirement necessarily prevent a truly superior student from writing an excellent research paper and viewing the project as meaningful. Although Jacki's work on her chlorofluorocarbons paper supported her description of herself as "obsessive-compulsive," she replied when asked how she would have reacted to having to write on a literary topic,

I'd have ended up doing it the same way. Even if I didn't care about the topic at first, I'd make myself care a lot before I was through. I would not have allowed myself to turn in a paper any less polished than the one I turned in.
Nevertheless, Jacki was delighted to be able to write on a topic about which she cared passionately. Asked about her reasons for selecting her topic, she said,

I’ve been an environmentalist for a long time. I try to stay involved in Greenpeace activities and letter-writing campaigns, the World Wildlife Fund, things like that. I tend to be a little radical when it comes to the environment.

Jacki also expressed great relief over sidestepping the literary requirement and complained bitterly that almost all other essays in the course were on literary topics. And Ralph, the other honors student in this group, lost most of his enthusiasm for his second-semester paper once he concluded that he would have to write about Victor Hugo rather than about the musical Les Mis. Although one might expect the literary-topic requirement to be unfair mainly to weaker students like Larry, the greater danger could be that the requirement may undermine the enthusiasm of stronger students like Ralph and Jacki.

Finally, note that Ralph and Jacki, the honors students, were the only students in this sample to formulate their own topics. The weaker students either selected from the lists or else allowed the teacher to select for them. In Linda Flower and John Hayes’s terms, this suggests one way that stronger students take a more active approach to task representation than do weaker students. Equally significantly, however, it points to yet another difficulty with the topic lists. When interviewed, the teachers and the librarians alike stated that
the lists existed mainly for the weaker students who, in Kathy Reed's words, "couldn't come up with a literary topic on their own if their lives depended on it." Given this reality, perhaps teachers need to think twice before filling their topic lists with suggestions like "Euripides the Psychologist" and "Oracles and Prophecy in the Epics."

**Sociology Topics**

About a week after securing permission to write about the ozone layer, Jacki told Dr. Norton that she was already working on a paper on that topic for her sociology class with Dr. McDaniel. (She had, in fact, begun to research the topic during the first week of classes, although Dr. McDaniel's due date was not until two months into the semester.) Dr. Norton allowed her to use the same paper for both classes, and Dr. McDaniel also gave his permission.

Greg was also in Dr. McDaniel's sociology class, for which he wrote a paper about drug-related gang violence. Like Jacki, he said that for this class in which literary topics were not required, he had chosen his topic based on personal interest.

**Rejected Topics**

The students who did not select a topic from topic lists invariably reported considering other topics before settling on their choices. Ralph had considered writing about Dr. Seuss, but because he had encountered difficulty finding sources in an abortive attempt to write about Seuss in high
school and because he described the experience of viewing Les Mis as "phenomenal," he ended up writing about Victor Hugo. Jacki had been interested in Swimming to Cambodia because its author, Spalding Gray, was a friend of a friend, but she abandoned this topic after a preliminary library search failed to uncover any sources. Greg stated that he was more interested in religious cults than in drug-related gang violence, but chose not to write about religious cults because he didn't want Dr. McDaniel to think he was "weird."

**Task Definition**

Despite the fact that she greatly respected Dr. Norton, Jacki could not bring herself to leave her own views out of the paper, as Dr. Norton had discouraged her students to do. Although she stated that to establish a formal, authoritative tone, she had avoided "harsh words" and references to herself ("'I' coming from a freshman at a two-year college is pretty low on the persuasion pole"), she added, "This subject is important enough to me that I try to put my opinion in it. When you're finished with that paper, it'll be pretty clear that I think this is a really sad state of affairs and that something should be done about it."

Jacki also represented the task more ambitiously than Dr. Norton did in terms of sheer amount of work. When introducing the research paper and handing out the topic list, Dr. Norton had described the paper as "a five-to-ten-hour assignment"—even though she had also provided a schedule for completing
the assignment over a period of more than two months. In the 
hallway after class that day, Jacki turned to me and said, 
"Ten hours maximum to do a research paper? Ha! It takes me 
ten hours to read one source or to get one sentence right!"

Ralph, too, at times seemed to define the research-paper 
task more ambitiously than his teacher, Ms. Logan, had defined 
it for him. He recalled that in his first-semester 
composition paper, he had at times attempted to refute his 
sources’ appraisals of Stephen Spielberg as a filmmaker, thus 
showing his willingness to incorporate original thoughts and 
to assert authority in his own voice. In both the Dr. Seuss 
paper he had seriously considered and the Les Mis paper he 
attempted to research, he sought topics unlike those other 
students might choose, thus making it possible that even a 
teacher-as-examiner audience might gain new information from 
reading his paper. Furthermore, he chose the Les Mis topic 
because of his strong emotional reaction to viewing the 
musical, thus showing his willingness to use, in Ms. Logan’s 
terms, his ideas and feelings.

Unlike honors students Jacki and Ralph, the others 
represented the task in less ambitious ways. Sometimes, in 
fact, their interpretations were even less ambitious than 
those described by the teachers. Greg, for example, said of 
his research for the Iago paper,

I found one book that I could just read and make a 
complete paper out of it. But we’ve got to have 
four sources, which is kind of dumb, I think, if you 
can get all the information from two different good
sources, for contrast. But I'll do what the lady [Ms. Logan] says.

Greg not only appeared to represent the paper purely in terms of retrieving information, but also considered one or two sources to be adequate. Judging from his first sentence, he makes little distinction between a research paper and a book report. Marcia's definition of the topic "The Women in Poe's Life" as simply biographical snippets about various women, until she discussed the topic with Ms. Logan, also demonstrates the non-honors-students' generally unambitious task representations.

In Ms. Logan's class, another important part of task representation was the literary-topic requirement. Ralph rejected as inappropriate any articles about aspects of Les Mis other than methods of adapting the novel on which it was based. Similarly, Joe rejected articles about any aspect of the Beatles other than their lyrics as literature. In doing so, Joe was interpreting the assignment accurately: when interviewed, Ms. Logan confirmed that she had, in fact, repeatedly stressed that papers about the Beatles were to be about "the lyrics, not the group." This literary-approach task definition eventually led Ralph to change, albeit reluctantly, the focus of his paper, and contributed to Joe's decision to abandon the paper, stop coming to class, and take an F in the course. "My topic was really too narrow," Joe said. "If I could've written about the influence of the Beatles, even their literary influence, and not just about
their lyrics, then I would've been okay. But that's just a copout."

_Five-Paragraph Form_

An important aspect of the students' task representation was that some of them seemed to define the research paper as an expanded five-paragraph theme. Joe, for example, said, "Fifteen hundred words—that's 300 words a paragraph. Usually I'm lucky to get a hundred words into a paragraph. I don't see how I can get 1500 words out of this paper." When asked if the paper had to be a five-paragraph theme, he replied, "Yeah. Isn't that the basic setup for a term paper?" Later, as he pondered his alternatives, he asked, "Is it out of standard English form to do five paragraphs in the body? But then, that makes the thesis so long." Weeks later, after he had resigned himself to failing the course because of not completing the paper, he said, "I needed an introduction, five body paragraphs, and a conclusion, and I just wasn't finding material on five related topics."

Joe's assumptions are worth noting. First, he assumed that each point in his paper must take exactly one paragraph to develop, and that his paper must contain a thesis which mentions every point covered in the paper. Second, he assumed that the five-paragraph form is required not simply by his particular teacher, but by all teachers requiring term papers, or at least all English teachers ("standard English form").
In fact, Ms. Logan did not require that the research paper be in five-paragraph form, nor in the seven-paragraph-form Joe later seemed to envision. In fact, she had required only two graded essays previous to the research paper, and one of those two, the one-source essay about a poem, was not required to be in five-paragraph form. Apparently Joe’s assumptions come not simply from Ms. Logan’s class, but from the overall writing-instruction environment of the community college and perhaps of area high schools as well. Joe had inherited these myths, much to his detriment; in Bakhtinian terms, the voices of many English teachers played a part in his representing the task in a way which virtually assured that he would abandon the project and fail the course.

It was not difficult to hear echoes of these voices. Dr. Norton, in assigning a five-paragraph theme (not the research paper) to her class, said, "If you can master this form, you can take it anywhere in the world and into any college class, and it’ll work for you until the day you die." Earlier in the semester, for an essay on which Dr. Norton had not required the five-paragraph form, a student from outside the sample asked for permission to use the form. "In high school, I never wrote anything but a three-part thesis," the student said. "I don’t know how else to write."

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the extent to which the five-paragraph theme flourishes in the community college and in the area’s high schools was the college’s departmental
final exam for first-semester composition students. For these exams, students wrote for two hours on their choice from among three or four topics provided, and each essay was evaluated by three members of the English Department. Students had no way of knowing in advance which three teachers would evaluate their essay. One teacher estimated that in any given semester, writing for an audience they could view only as three anonymous college English teachers, roughly 75 percent of the school’s hundreds of first-semester composition students wrote five-paragraph themes.

Thus, the "campus climate for writing" (White 1) became a prominent "voice" in student texts. Joe was not the only student in the sample who felt the tug of the five-paragraph form, even when not required to write a specific assignment that way. Ralph at first attempted to write the 200-word, one-source poetry paper in five-paragraph form, abandoning the idea only when he realized that he lacked sufficient material. Greg said of his research paper for Ms. Logan, "It had more than five paragraphs, but I did it just like a regular English theme. I had three main points."

In fact, two of the three students who completed research papers for Ms. Logan used three-part-thesis statements, located in the final sentence of the opening paragraph. The final sentence of Ralph’s opening paragraph, reproduced here with its typographical error included, was

His exile, the competition among other French writers, and other events in his life gave Hugo the
emotional and spiritual background to write is finest novel, *Les Miserables*.

The final sentence of Greg's opening paragraph, reproduced here with its errors included, was

The expertise in the of Iago can be explained by motivation, his attitude toward the characters, and his villiany.

Larry, the other student in the sample who completed a research paper for Ms. Logan, also placed his thesis at the end of the first paragraph, then began his second paragraph with "Throughout Hemingway's life there were three women who formed his views toward women." He then devoted one paragraph apiece to each of the three women. Earlier, during a conference, Ms. Logan had looked over Larry's material and had suggested a possible thesis sentence, a sentence which Larry had copied down verbatim and eventually used as his paper's thesis. This may account for his lack of a three-part thesis: Ms. Logan is perhaps less tied to the three-part formula than Larry is.

Jacki, in her research paper for Dr. Norton, departed from preset structure and instead let ideas determine her paper's structure. Thus, her introduction takes two paragraphs, with some elements of the thesis found in the first paragraph and others in the second. Yet even Jacki was not immune to the campus's prevailing voices regarding what an essay should look like. When interviewed, she expressed anxiety about her paper's failure to conform to the expected structure:
It worried me because what she’s [Dr. Norton] trying to teach us is boom, boom, boom, introduction, body, conclusion. Having gone through class, my mind gets real structured that it should be introductory paragraph, thesis sentence as last sentence, body, conclusion. You get a set rhythm. But the way my brain works, I can’t seem to get that down. I want it to go from point A to B to C to D, but in the process of doing that, my brain’ll go, "Oh, here’s another idea," and then I’ll get something totally different. Then I’ll think, "But this relates to my first idea," and I’ll want to say so, so then it goes ABACDA. And that’s what I’m afraid of with this thesis statement. I guess sometimes I confuse myself.

Jacki’s confusion may be explained using terminology which combines the thoughts of Bakhtin with the thoughts of Donald Murray. In a Bakhtinian sense, Jacki’s thoughts regarding ways that she should organize an essay have been shaped by the thoughts of Dr. Norton, the college’s English Department, and thousands of other traditionalist English teachers. Yet as she writes, Jacki becomes aware of the heteroglossia of her own text (despite her unfamiliarity with the term), so that her thoughts are shaped by the thoughts she has encountered in her sources and by her previous thoughts about those thoughts, until new thoughts are born and shaped through interaction with thoughts already found in the text. Thus, Jacki begins to seek an appropriate textual structure for these new thoughts, so that the text itself has become a "voice" which contradicts the voices of Dr. Norton, the English Department, and the wider community of traditionalist English teachers. As Murray puts it:
The writing will tell you how to write. . . . The answers to the problems of this piece of writing lie in the evolving text. I have faith that if I read carefully—if I listen to my own developing voice—I will discover what I have to say. (90; italics Murray’s; underlining mine)

In the end, Jacki did listen to her own developing voice and structured her paper accordingly. Yet as stated earlier, she greatly respected Dr. Norton, who strongly advocated a largely preset, formulaic structure for student texts. In listening to her own voice, Jacki had to reject the voice of a respected teacher, as well as the collective voice of the college’s writing program. No wonder she was confused.

One further point: for some students, task representation is a much simpler matter. Asked what the assignment called for, Larry replied, "About 1300 words." Asked if it called for anything else, he said, "Four to six sources."

Audience

In many ways, a comparison of Jacki to the other composition students in the sample confirms Flower and Hayes’s statement that "good writers are simply solving a different problem than poor writers" (30). Not only did she choose far more ambitious approaches than the purely-informative-report task representation and the preset structure which most of the others, with their teachers’ encouragement, adopted, but she also envisioned, as others in the sample did not, a broader audience for her paper than simply teacher-as-examiner. Although she took pride in her 4.0 GPA, she stated, "I do not
write papers with teachers in mind. With this paper, it was just that having been environmentally conscious and active, I wanted other people to be that way too. I was interested in the topic and wanted other people to be aware of it." As will be discussed later in this chapter, Jacki’s sense of a wider audience affected strategies for writing the paper.

None of the other students mentioned potential readers other than their teachers. Again, the literary-topic requirement may have discouraged the students from envisioning a broader audience: students producing informative discourse to be graded by someone who knows more about the topic than they do cannot be expected to envision any audience besides the teacher-as-examiner. Nor did the teachers encourage them to consider a wider audience. For example, Dr. Norton answered a student’s request to use "you" in a paper by replying, "You may not use 'you' unless you mean 'Dr. Norton,' which you probably don’t."

The students seemed to understand their teacher-as-examiner audience well. Asked the criteria by which their papers would be graded, the students responded in ways which closely coincided with the already-discussed criteria the teachers had listed during interviews. Most of the students seemed particularly conscious of the effect grammatical and mechanical errors could have on their grades, sometimes to the extent of altering their sentence structure to minimize the likelihood of error. Ralph stated:
Commas kill me. A lot of times I find myself not wanting to write a sentence down. You know, I'll hear a nice, elaborate sentence, and I'll say the sentence, but I won't know how to punctuate it exactly, so I won't write it down because I'm afraid I'll lose points.

The voices of Ms. Logan and the school's English Department had influenced Ralph's textual voice. At best, Ralph has had to simplify his essays' sentence structure and avoid, out of fear, the practice he needs to master a more complicated sentence structure. Worse, given that research has established a correlation between critical thinking and relatively complicated sentence structures (Hillocks 69-70), a more disturbing interpretation is possible: perhaps Ralph has had to simplify the very thoughts that his essays express in order to avoid the complicated sentence structures that complex thoughts often require.

Ralph stated that he preferred English classes in which his essays were graded for ideas more than for grammatical and mechanical correctness. In fact, he seemed to prefer the literary-analysis essays required in second-semester composition over the frequently personal-experience essays in his previous semester of First-Year Composition because he believed that teachers were likely to grade literary-analysis essays mainly for ideas.

Jacki also viewed literary-analysis essays as graded more on ideas than were the more personal essays of the previous semester. Remarkably, however, this was Jacki's reason for preferring first-semester composition and its personal
experience essays, because she felt pressure to interpret literature the way her teacher interpreted it:

I have problems with [Dr. Norton's] subjectivity, and more so in this class than in Comp One. In Comp One, it was all writing about something that happened in your life, and that doesn't have a subjective component to grade. But in this class, it's all interpretation of a set something. What I see in a story may not be what she sees in it, but if I don't see what she sees in it, I'm not gonna get the grade.

In other words, Jacki felt pressure to make her essays conform to Dr. Norton's interpretations of stories (a difficult feat, given that Dr. Norton only briefly alluded to the assigned works during class), and this pressure to conform chafed against her determination not to "write papers with the teacher in mind."

Specifically, Jacki was upset about a five-point deduction her essay on setting had received. Dr. Norton had required the students to write their essays about setting in five-paragraph, three-part-thesis form, and she had defined setting as "the time, place, and condition" of a story. Jacki had dutifully written an introductory paragraph, a paragraph about time, a paragraph about place, a paragraph about condition, and a concluding paragraph. She had not, however, discussed the effect of setting on other elements of the story or on the story as a whole. Dr. Nordquist had written in the paper's margin "-5 What's the point?" This five-point deduction, combined with a two-point deduction for an indentation error, left Jacki with a 93 on the paper—one
point short of an A. Jacki said of this paper and its grade:

The two points for indentation, I can relate to that. If I misspell a word and she takes off two points or if I write a sentence fragment and she takes off ten, I can deal with that. That's not subjective. But taking off five points just because I didn't say what she wanted me to is totally subjective. "What's the point?" She didn't tell us we had to make a point! She said, "Just make sure you include time, place, and condition. Well, I didn't that, you know?"

Jacki's essay, its grade, and her reaction to it dramatize several points. First, we again see that problems can arise in literature-based composition precisely because of its alleged strength: we are within the teacher's area of expertise. To a teacher trained in literary analysis, the idea that an essay about setting should make some point about the setting's contribution to the story's overall effect may seem too obvious to mention in class--yet the idea was not obvious even to a straight-A student. Second, if they receive extended exposure to classroom standards that emphasize surface correctness rather than substantial thought, even excellent students may accept and internalize those standards. As evidence from this chapter demonstrates, Jacki cared deeply about her writing when she could write about a subject other than literary texts and could let her ideas guide the structure of her text. But when required to produce a text which would contain exactly five paragraphs, dealing with three specific points about a story selected by the teacher, and which would be graded through the deduction of a standardized number of points for specific errors in spelling,
punctuation, and grammar, Jacki had temporarily adopted a
definition of good writing which, according to Mina
Shaughnessy, characterizes Basic Writers: "'good writing' to
them means 'correct [error-free] writing,' nothing more"
(Errors 7). In defining good writing that way, Jacki was
simply adopting the definition she had seen implicitly
embraced by Dr. Norton and other members of the English
Department.

Jacki was not the only student who at times defined good
writing simply as error-free writing. Kevin, a student who
later withdrew from the study, recalled receiving a 67 (a D)
on his first-semester composition research paper, with most of
the lost points deducted because he had used an endnote page
rather than parenthetical citations. "It made me mad, losing
that many points for putting the notes on a separate page,"
Kevin said. "I mean, Comp One was basically about writing,
and this wasn't writing--it wasn't grammar mistakes or
anything. But then, maybe footnote mistakes are mistakes in
grammar. I don't know." Like Jacki, Kevin apparently viewed
point deductions as legitimate only if they were for items
which could be broadly defined as "grammar." Moreover, his
statement comes uncomfortably close to equating writing with
grammar.

That such an equation echoes the collective voice of the
English Department is demonstrated by the fact that the
students seemed to view this concern with error as the special
province of English teachers. Jacki and Greg, the two students who were turning in research papers for sociology as well as composition, both stated that their English teachers would be more concerned with areas other than content, and would therefore be harder to please. "Ms. Logan's an English teacher, so she won't be as concerned with content as with MLA form and everything," Greg said. "She wants things neater, wants them to look right. Dr. McDaniel is basically just interested in the content." Jacki stated that Dr. McDaniel would largely read the paper for ideas, whereas Dr. Norton would "pick it apart." The teachers' comments during interviews, discussed earlier in the chapter, suggest that Jacki and Greg were largely correct.

With topics selected, task representations beginning to form and audiences largely established, the students were ready to turn to the library.

Locating Information

During interviews, some of the community college's reference librarians drew a rueful contrast between the ideal research process described in "the literature" and the processes of the students they worked with. Ideally, they said, a student should select a general subject that interests him or her, use background research involving reference materials to narrow the topic and to generate a tentative thesis or research question, and then let that thesis or question focus the research process, while carefully
evaluating sources for appropriateness, reliability, and authority. But far more often, they said, students enter the library and make no effort to find material on their own, instead going directly to a librarian and saying something like, "I have to do a research paper with at least four sources, so I want you to find me four articles about abortion, and here's what I want the articles you find to say." The librarians described the students as approaching library research the way they would approach dinner at a fast-food restaurant. The librarian referred to in this study as Cindy Lewis said, "I call us 'the McDonald's of knowledge.'" Patricia Gates said, "We call ourselves information waitresses. We serve up four books about child abuse. We coddle them."

Ms. Gates may have had in mind students like Larry. After accepting Ms. Logan's selection of Hemingway's treatment of women as his topic because it appeared to be easy, Larry went to the community college's library in search of sources. After about a half hour, he became discouraged, left, and the next day returned to Ms. Logan's office to tell of the problems he had encountered. "He was having terrible difficulty," Ms. Logan said later. "Evidently he was just trying to clear the shelves." Ms. Logan responded by calling the library, describing Larry's topic, and asking the librarians to find some appropriate sources and hold them at the check-out desk for Larry. Larry returned to the library
and, in his words, "I just went up and they gave me six books. I didn’t have to dig or nothing. Just told ‘em what my topic was and they already had ‘em waiting." The librarians also provided Larry with a list of relevant articles from periodicals. The sources were more potentially useful than those many first-year college students locate: topic-specific books like *The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck*, books of feminist criticism that deal with Hemingway like *The Troublesome Helpmate*, articles from specialized periodicals like *The Explicator*.

Larry spent about three hours in the library this time, eventually rejecting some books, photocopying passages from others, checking others out, and photocopying certain articles from the list. "I just copy the articles, so I don’t have to go back to the library," he explained. "I don’t like libraries. And I don’t know if I’ll even be going back, because I’ve got all my sources, you know."

During interviews, the reference librarians said that while the service they provided for Larry was not common, neither was it unique. The librarians did not like the idea that the check-out counter should be a sort of drive-in window where students could pick up pre-ordered packets of sources, but as Patricia Gates said, "We do just about whatever the teacher calling us requests us to do."

Ms. Gates expressed concern that the librarians’ eagerness to help might discourage students from becoming
self-sufficient researchers. "What'll he do the next time he has to do a paper for a class?" she asked of Larry. "Or what'll he do when he's done here and transfers to a university?"

These are valid concerns. Having had to take two semesters of Basic Writing, Larry was in his fourth college writing class, his third requiring a research paper, as well as in his fifth term at the community college. Thus, his problem did not seem to be merely a need for more research-paper experience. In fact, he seemed rather adept at avoiding experience in serious research: his approach in first-semester composition had been to choose a subject, AIDS, on which a multitude of sources were readily available, and then to refuse to narrow the subject in any way that would limit the available sources, instead producing an essay that received a D- largely because it lacked unity.

Mark, a student who later withdrew from the study, provides evidence that the librarians at times "coddled" students even when not asked to by teachers. Although Mark was also in his fourth writing class at the community college, his third requiring a research paper, he entered the library, immediately approached a librarian, and asked her to show him how to use INFOTRAC, a computerized magazine index which is as basic to the community college's library as the Reader's Guide is to other libraries, but much easier to use. "She showed me how to work the computer and then told me to look through it,"
he said. "And while I was looking through it, she went off and found two sources for me."

If Larry and Mark were passive researchers, Greg was a casual one. He avoided the community college library altogether because he was uncertain about how to use it, having ignored library orientation sessions in both of his First-Year Composition classes. Instead, he made two trips to the public library, one for each of his research papers. For his "lit paper," as he referred to his paper for composition, he spent roughly half an hour at the library, relying solely on the card catalogue to help him acquire three books—the exact number of sources required for the paper. He did, however, supplement these with one other source: he bought the Cliff's Notes to Othello. For the sociology paper, he relied solely on the Reader's Guide to help him acquire articles, spending about an hour in the library. Of that hour, he said,

I spent forty-five minutes of it letting some dumb high school girl try to teach me how to use the Reader's Guide. I knew more about it than she did, but she was cute. Got her name and phone number—gonna do all right, too. So in a roundabout way, Dr. McDaniel got me a date for this weekend.²

The other students all invested more effort in their library searches than did Larry or Greg. Ralph, Jacki, and Joe all reported using both the community college library and the public library, and Joe additionally used the University library. Marcia, researching the women in Poe's life, had already used four libraries—the community college's, the
University's, and two branches of the public library--at the
time that she withdrew from this study.

Ralph sought a variety of sources, eventually working
with two periodical articles and a reference work as well as
regular books. But he refused to look at anything written by
(as opposed to about) Hugo, and he selected exclusively short
books about Hugo or longer surveys of French literature in
which only a limited section dealt with Hugo. He also said of
some of the books he rejected, "Some of those books were
ancient, the kind with rough edges, not even bound evenly.
And they were stained with something. You wonder, 'What've
these people been doing with these books?'" In general,
Ralph's strategy seemed to be to acquire a large number of
sources to choose from while simultaneously limiting the
amount of time he would have to commit to any one source.

Joe spent more time finding less useful information than
anyone else in the study. After finding little about the
Beatles's lyrics during a 35-minute session in the community
college's library, he went to the public library, where he
worked from 10 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. without even breaking for
lunch, mainly searching for periodicals. By then he had
narrowed his search to the late 1960's, years when Beatles
albums like Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band received
serious attention from critics. Finally, having heard that
the University had the best collection of late-sixties
periodicals in town, he spent several hours in the University library.

Despite all this time and effort, Joe found scarcely any material appropriate for a literary approach to the Beatles. As mentioned earlier, he eventually gave up on the paper and took an F in the class. Mike Rose has argued that inflexible attitudes toward rules and procedures for writing can cause students to encounter difficulty meeting assignment deadlines. Similarly, Carol Kuhlthau, in perhaps the most extensive available study of the search processes of students working on research papers, emphasizes the need for students to adjust their topic focuses, if necessary, so that available library resources can accommodate those focuses (213-21). Although Ralph made such an adjustment, shifting his focus from *Les Mis* to Victor Hugo, Joe failed to do so.

Of course, Joe could not have satisfied Ms. Logan's literary-topic requirement through a slight shift of focus; he needed to take the more drastic step of discarding his topic altogether and starting from scratch. Joe's failure not only further demonstrates the problems which composition students can encounter when required to write on literary topics, but also further demonstrates the problems with Ms. Logan's and Dr. Norton's beliefs that their topic lists allowed students to work within their fields of interest while still writing about literature. Knowing that Joe was interested in music, Ms. Logan had selected from her list a topic dealing with the
Beatles--but had required that Joe write his paper not about music, but about literature. In trying to help him by presenting him a topic within his field of interest, she had given him a task he eventually found impossible.

Not surprisingly, Jacki was the most effective researcher of the students discussed in this chapter. Not that her library-search methods were in themselves remarkable: she looked in the community college’s library and the public library, using INFOTRAC and the card catalogues. However, she also demonstrated a thoroughness not seen in the other students, starting her research within a day of Dr. McDaniel’s topic announcement and locating one important source in a National Geographic she had at home and another by following up on Dr. Norton’s tip that Time Magazine, instead of its usual Man-of-the-Year or Woman-of-the-Year issue, had recently devoted a cover story to the Earth as "Planet of the Year."

Significantly, she was the only one of the students to enjoy the search for information, saying,

> It’s like when you’re an antique collector--part of the joy is the hunt, finding that find and uncovering something. It’s almost like collecting great painters. You get a great painting that’s unsigned and you know it’s a great artist, so you find the proof.

Library Orientation

Both Ms. Logan and Dr. Norton set aside a class period for library orientation roughly two months before the paper was due.
When interviewed, the community college's librarians stated that library orientations work best when they are held after students have received an assignment which will require library use, ideally at a time when the students will need to use the library within the next week or so. Ms. Logan's and Dr. Norton's students had already been assigned the research paper, but they probably did not yet feel the need to use the library soon. In her study, Kuhlthau found that many students consider roughly four weeks to be the optimum amount of time for working on a research paper. Most of the students discussed in this chapter, in fact, did not begin looking for sources until almost a month after the library orientation sessions—a little over a month before the papers were due. On the other hand, no one schedule works for everybody: Jacki had already completed her research and had almost completed her first draft by the time her class's library orientation took place.

The only students to comment on the library orientation were Joe and Greg, neither of whom saw value in the orientation. Joe, who feared the research paper because he doubted his ability to work without supervision, said,

That always kills me, the library day. They show you the standard procedure, and you've been through it five or six times, but they never give you a period when everybody's in there researching, just a period to look.

Librarian Patricia Gates argued, however, that class periods set aside for library research (as opposed to
orientation) were disruptive as well as inefficient. "About five or six students will actually work, and the teachers will sort of hover around them trying to help, and the others mill around and talk and cause a disturbance," she said.

Those "others" probably include students like Greg, who said that he spent the first part of the library orientation "trying to tie this girl's belt to the chair with this little string" and then left early. (Ms. Logan recalled arriving at the library orientation session about halfway through the period and finding Greg lounging outside the library.) Greg also reported that in his previous semester of First-Year Composition, his teacher had left a few minutes after the orientation session began--after which he had walked out a minute or so later. In high school, he had simply skipped library orientation sessions. "The ones that are going to use the library will learn to use it in the first two weeks anyway, orientation or not," he said.

While Ms. Logan attended only part of the library orientation session, Dr. Norton did not attend her class's orientation session at all. The librarian conducting the orientation, Cindy Lewis, took advantage of Dr. Norton's absence by gently discouraging the class from attempting most of the topics on Dr. Norton's list. Ms. Lewis did, however, emphasize literary research at first, not having been informed by Dr. Norton that class members had the option of writing on nonliterary topics. When she discovered that class members
had this option, Ms. Lewis briefly seemed hesitant, not having prepared for a general-topic orientation. She at first continued with an exclusively literary focus, telling class members they would all need to know about literary research "later, when you transfer to a university." Eventually, though, she also discussed general-topic research strategies, although she was able to use only Jacki's topic as an immediately relevant example, most other class members not having chosen topics yet. When the class was over and all of the students had left, she said to me, "I'm so glad you were there. It was nice to see at least one face that wasn't blank."

Organizing Information and Formulating a Focus

Having located their sources, the students faced the tasks of reading and planning to write. It is during this stage, according to Kuhlthau and Stotsky, that the focus for the research paper ideally should emerge. According to Stotsky, this focus should emerge through an interaction among reading, thinking, and writing (notes, outlines, etc.). For some of the students, however, the reading, the pre-first-draft writing, and perhaps the pre-first-draft thinking, as well, were extremely limited.

Greg stated that he took no notes at all for his Iago paper. In fact, despite Ms. Logan's elaborate schedule for preliminary deadlines, he said that he did not even begin reading his sources until the day before the paper was due.
After spending a few hours examining his sources, he did write an outline--his only pre-first-draft writing--and attempted to follow the outline as he wrote the paper. That outline, if examined separately from Greg's paper, features a clear thesis and topics and subtopics which appear to develop that thesis, implying that despite his minimal commitment of time and energy, Greg did, in fact, find a focus prior to beginning his first draft, evidently through an interaction among reading, writing, and thinking. As will be discussed later, however, his research paper turned out to be far less focused than the outline might suggest.

For his paper on drug-related gang violence, Greg began reading his sources the weekend before the paper was due. (The due date fell on a Wednesday.) He stated that he devoted only an hour to reading and taking notes, adding, "Weekends are important to a college student." During that time he accumulated four notebook pages full of notes about eight pages of articles. The day before the paper was due, he wrote a rough outline with numbered subtopics and then coded his notes to the outline by writing a subtopic number in the margin beside each note. In this case, however, the outline simply lists nine topics, with no overriding thesis to unify them. If Greg had formulated a focus for this paper prior to writing the first draft, one cannot discern that focus by examining the outline--or the finished paper.
In his first interview, Joe stated that he did not customarily take notes for research papers. "I don’t take notes," he said. "I do some photocopying, but I don’t underline. Mostly I just get some information straight out of books and throw it on a piece of paper for my rough draft." This method, described by Kennedy as characteristic of weaker writers (443), may help to explain Joe’s assessment of his previous research papers:

What I’ve had a problem with on research papers is gathering all the information out of these different books and fitting it all together. Each book seems to go off in its own direction. I can’t gather my thoughts, so the bodies of my papers are usually jumbled together without much direction.

Conceivably, if Joe had taken notes for these previous papers, he might have been able to find more connections among the ideas expressed in his various sources, and thus could have found a focus, in the way Stotsky suggests. Notetaking does not, however, automatically assure that a student will formulate a focus. Joe did take notes during his research about the Beatles, but still could not find a focus for the essay. After abandoning the project, he stated, "What I was finding was all going in different directions. There was no thesis emerging. I struggled to find a thesis and just couldn’t find it." The required literary emphasis prevented Joe from adjusting his focus to accommodate the materials he found, a strategy Kuhlthau describes as crucial in formulating a focus.
Larry, too, had failed to find a thesis during the search process. He had labored dutifully, keeping to a schedule of reading one source per night in order to meet Ms. Logan’s deadlines and taking notes on three-by-five cards because this was the recommended method. But lacking both background and interest in literary research, Larry been unable to find any connections among the quotations (never paraphrases) he had jotted down. Unlike his classmate Joe, Larry had mastered one survival skill: going to the teacher’s office to ask for help. Ms. Logan later said,

He was floundering again. When he came in, he had some notes written down, but they were just isolated things that had no bearing on each other. He was not tying anything together. So I said, "Why don’t you approach it this way? ‘Hemingway’s treatment of women shows his chauvinistic attitudes,’ or something like that. A lot of times when they’re floundering like that, I go ahead and help them with their thesis, because they don’t know what in the world is going on.

Interviewed the day after the conference, Larry seemed content. "She told me exactly what to write and how to go about doing it," he said. "Said you should write about one lady and then the second lady and then the third lady, and then tie them all in at the end"—a formula sounding remarkably like a five-paragraph theme.

However, when Larry attempted to write his paper based on the thesis and structure Ms. Logan had suggested, he found himself far short of the assignment’s 1200-word minimum. Characteristically, he returned to Ms. Logan for advice, during a conference which I was able to observe. She had
asked him to bring *The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Hemingway*, one of the sources the librarians had found for him. Ms. Logan went through Hemingway-related sections of that book with Larry, stating, "You can use this," or "This sort of thing you can’t use." She was particularly taken by a passage in the book where, she said to Larry, "It talks about three important women in Hemingway’s life. That gives you a real clear angle to follow up on. It tells you what you can use and what you can’t." Larry was at first reluctant, protesting, "But then I’d have to completely change my thesis. I’d have to throw away some of my notes." However, after Ms. Logan reassured him that he would not have to jettison any of his existing material, he acquiesced, and by grafting a modified five-paragraph theme about Hemingway’s treatment of real-life women onto a modified five-paragraph theme about Hemingway’s portrayal of women in fiction, Larry eventually structured his research paper. Thus, while Larry’s focus did emerge through an interplay among reading, writing, and thinking, that focus was modified after Larry had attempted a first draft and had fallen short of the required minimum length; more significantly, the focus, as well as much of the thinking and some of the reading, did not originate from Larry.

In contrast, Ralph and Jacki both found focuses for their papers on their own. Their independent success may have resulted largely from their active, plan-driven approaches to
their sources. For example, Ralph said,

As I’m reading, I’ll be trying to decide what my main objective in this paper will be, what I want to write about. As I’m researching, I’ll put it together in a rough order and find out what goes where. The first thing I need to do is find a thesis so that I can pick out exactly what I need and the order I need it.

In her study of students’ search processes for research papers, Kuhlthau warns against formulating a focus too soon, particularly if one then becomes reluctant to adjust that focus to accommodate the material encountered during research (113). Judging from the above quotation, Ralph might sometimes be guilty of premature formulation. Evidently, however, he ordinarily finds his focus during the search process, as Kuhlthau and Stotsky claim should happen, rather than while writing the paper.

Ralph mentioned one other method he uses to formulate a focus during the search process. "Usually, I’ve been lucky enough to find a book that will pretty much write the paper," he said. "I can take the structure from it, and maybe it’ll mention other sources as well, and I can go to those sources for more material to fill in." Such an approach suggests an unambitious task definition: far from, in Bakhtinian terms, using his own textual voice and his own intentions to dominate the voices of his sources, Ralph is evidently willing to let a single source provide both his paper’s focus and its structure. Two other members of the sample, both discussed in later chapters, also said that they had taken their research
paper’s structure from the structure of a key source either for the papers described in this study or in the past. Although other studies have described this strategy as characteristic of weaker students (Kantz, *Composing* 43-44; Penrose), two of these three students had GPA’s of 3.5 or higher, and both students who adopted this strategy for the papers described in this study received A’s on those papers.

Ralph, however, did not find any one source around which he could structure his entire Victor Hugo paper. Still, early in his research he discovered an article about Hugo entitled "A Life Hardly Less Romantic and Turbulent Than His Novels." Although the article did not compare specific events and people in Hugo’s life with events or characters in the novels, Ralph was able to use his viewing of *Les Mis* to draw parallels between situations and characters in *Les Miserables* and situations and people in Hugo’s life—the sort of thing Marcia had to be told to do with "The Women in Poe’s Life." Thus, circumstances caused Ralph to represent the task more ambitiously again, combining his own ideas with ideas encountered in the article rather than simply reporting. Almost a month before the paper was due, Ralph was already hoping that this autobiographical-elements-in-the-novel concept would provide his paper’s central focus. However, because he failed to find sufficient material on this topic, he later changed his strategy—accommodating his focus to the material he encountered—and demoted the autobiographical
novel idea to one of three subtopics supporting his thesis. The autobiographical-novel concept did, however, turn out to dominate the last two pages of his six-page paper.

Ralph eventually accumulated eleven notebook pages' worth of notes, with subtopics written in the margin beside almost half of them. Nevertheless, despite Ralph's approach to his sources, he evidently did not fully decide on his paper's structure until after he began writing the first draft. He did not write from an outline, so no document records the textual structure he envisioned prior to his writing of the first draft. Interviewed four days before the paper was due and two days before he began writing, however, he said that the paper would summarize critical opinion of Hugo's works in general and then deal with autobiographical elements in *Les Miserables*. Both subjects are present in the finished paper, but they comprise only about one-half of the text. Although some of Ralph's subtopics emerged during the search process, his focus--articulated by a thesis statement which seems more a gathering place for information than an overriding criterion for determining which information is relevant--apparently crystallized only through his writing the first draft.

In contrast, Jacki, after an almost textbook-conventional search process, arrived at her focus in *exactly* the way that Stotsky suggests focus formulation takes place in most research papers: through a "dynamic interaction between writing and thinking," an interaction featuring "categorizing,
organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing" ("On Developing" 207). As is usually recommended, Jacki started with a broad topic which interested her: air pollution. As she found sources, she prepared a working bibliography, one entry per three-by-five card. Then she began reading and taking notes, again using three-by-five cards:

Anything that I felt was relevant or made a shocking statement or looked interesting, I made a card on it. I very much like note cards because they're easy to deal with. When you start researching, your brain goes, "Wow, I can't comprehend all this stuff." Of course you can--with these little cards.

Never having written a research paper in high school, Jacki had never attempted to use note cards and bibliography cards until the previous semester, when she had been taught to use them from Dr. Norton during first-semester composition. Although Dr. Norton required students to turn in note cards along with the finished paper, Jacki made clear that even if she were not required to turn in note cards, she still would have used note cards voluntarily. Of all the 24 students in the sample, Jacki was the only one who wanted to use note cards, as opposed to being required to do so.

She was not dogmatic about note cards, however: she used them only for books and one 35-page article. For shorter articles, she photocopied pages and underlined, adding comments ("why?", "important," etc.) in the margins.

Jacki did depart from conventional advice in one way--characteristically, by working harder than the teacher advised. Dr. Norton had advised students to read only
selectively from books, using indexes and tables of contents, but Jacki read two books from cover to cover for the research paper. "I have to read the whole thing to get what I want out of it," she said. "I can't pull together 2,000 words just by hit or miss, just by skimming."

Not surprisingly, Jacki accumulated a huge mass of information, far more than she would need for the assignment. Her methods of organizing this information demonstrate that a highly committed writer's process is recursive, even when that writer seems to be following current-traditional advice which breaks the assignment into a series of seemingly separate steps. Jacki's recursiveness lay precisely in Stotsky's "categorizing, organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing."

Jacki's first categorizing and organizing procedure was to produce a rough outline (reproduced as Appendix B on page 682), simply listing major subtopics she wanted to cover. Having listed subtopics, she returned to her note cards and her photocopied pages to add topic headings. This process, in turn, allowed her to narrow her topic and focus more clearly:

As I started poring through the information, I realized that tackling the whole atmosphere from earth to thirty miles up was too broad. Dealing with all chemicals was way to broad. So I started paring down. I asked myself, "Now what exactly do I want to write about?" I wanted to write about the greenhouse effect. So then I asked, "Well, what concerns the greenhouse effect?" Fluorocarbons, carbon dioxide, depletion of the ozone. Then I started to get a more narrow vision and finally got it down to chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer.
As she headed toward this "more narrow vision," Jacki wrote down notes on the back of her outline page, in a form that is not quite outline and not quite rough draft. (These notes are reproduced as Appendix C on page 683.) One cannot be certain of the extent to which the writing led to Jacki's clearer sense of topic and the extent to which the clearer sense of topic led to Jacki's writing. At any rate, both the writing and Jacki's clearer sense of topic led her back to her note cards. She now eliminated some of her sources and note cards--material dealing with carbon dioxide, for example--as irrelevant to her revised vision of the paper. Also, on most of the note cards and photocopied pages which she kept, she crossed out the original topic headings and replaced them with more precise headings corresponding to her revised vision. With her paper's focus and structure now clearer in her mind, Jacki wrote yet another outline, tentatively organizing the paper into nine paragraphs. (This outline is reproduced as Appendix D on page 684.) This revised outline, in turn, led her back to her note cards and photocopied pages yet again, to add notations such as "6th paragraph" to the subtopic headings.

Although the actual paper contains sixteen paragraphs rather than nine, Jacki's revised outline does list all the major points found in the paper, in the order in which the paper discusses them. The paper simply expands certain ideas into more than one paragraph. Thus, the focus for Jacki's
paper emerged during her meticulous research-and-organization work, in an almost textbook demonstration of Stotsky's theory. **First Drafts**

In general, the students' behavior on the rough drafts confirmed patterns already by now clear: Joe had given up and did not write; Greg put in the least effort possible; Larry relied on his teacher's help; Ralph made a serious, if somewhat uninspired, effort; and Jacki was the ideal, if somewhat obsessive-compulsive, student.

Greg stated that for both of his papers, he waited until the day before the due date to begin the rough draft. (For the Iago paper, he waited until the day before the due date even to read his sources.) According to the interviews, he wrote both papers at home, sitting on his couch with a tray table in front of him. As he wrote, he listened to heavy-metal music by Queensryche and Iron Maiden, among others. Each rough draft took under four hours to write, including breaks to watch television or to play basketball. Greg also stated that he wrote much of the rough draft of the paper for Dr. McDaniel's class while talking on the telephone to a friend.

Greg composed Dr. McDaniel's paper with his rough outline and reading notes in front of him, crossing out notes once he had used them in the paper. However, because his notes did not contain enough material for his paper to achieve the assigned length, Greg also had his sources—eight pages' worth
of photocopied magazine articles—in front of him. "I just sat there and looked at my sources, and when I saw something I liked, I'd say, 'That looks good. I'll put it in right there,'" he reported. As already discussed, previous research describes less successful synthesis writers as frequently looking through their sources for quotations while composing, rather than taking extensive notes in advance (Kennedy 443).

Greg stated that he composed his paper for Ms. Logan’s class immediately after spending four hours reading and skimming sources—his only reading for the paper. He had taken no notes. "I just wrote it out like a composition," he said. "Everything from my head—bing, bang, boom."

Greg’s rough drafts do, in fact, suggest only minimal effort on his part. Although both are written in pencil, neither contains more than a few visible erasures or cross-outs. Discounting five above-the-line parenthetical citations, the only visible changes in the rough draft for Dr. McDaniel’s class consist of four erasures or crossouts, two involving one-word changes, the other two involving two-word changes. The only visible changes in the paper for Ms. Logan’s class are four erasures or crossouts, each involving only a single letter, in a spelling or capitalization correction. As Greg put it, bing, bang, boom.

Despite his dislike for libraries, Larry composed his first draft in the community college’s library. Much like Greg, he produced a first draft in pencil, with only one
crossout and four visible erasures in three pages. This draft does, however, contain red-ink markings of suggested revisions—markings made by Ms. Logan after Larry brought the rough draft to her. As mentioned earlier, this rough draft was far short of the assignment's minimum length, and Ms. Logan suggested ways Larry could expand it. Because the deadline was drawing near, Larry did not add this material to the first draft as such. Instead, he added the material while preparing the final copy in the community college's Writing Center, first writing a paragraph in pencil and then typing that paragraph into the word-processed final copy, then writing another paragraph in pencil, and so forth.

If Greg's and Larry's transcribing methods were somewhat peculiar, Ralph's was even more so. Ralph wrote his first draft at home on a word processor, with notes in front of him but with no outline. However, because his word processor lacked a printer and was incompatible with the printers in the community college's Writing Center, Ralph then hand-copied his rough draft from the screen and worked from this handwritten version when preparing the final copy in the Writing Center. Asked why he used his word processor when he could not print from it, Ralph stated, "It was easier for me to use the one at home. And I can type faster than I can write, so I can keep up with my thoughts better that way." Ralph also stated that he had benefited from hand copying his first draft, saying, "It made me keep looking at what I had written, so that if
something was wrong, sooner or later I'd see it and say, 'That's not right.'"

Ralph also stated, "In the first draft, I'd write a paragraph about this, a paragraph about that, without worrying about connecting them or getting any kind of logical flow"—a practice some composition theorists call "island-hopping." Thus, despite his attempts to find a structure while researching, he finally relied on the writing process itself to show him the connections among his ideas and to provide the paper's structure.

As in the issue of whether or not to adjust the paper topic, Ralph's flexibility helped him while Joe's inflexibility assured his failure. Both students had hoped to find a focus during their search processes. Unable to find a satisfactory focus during his search process, Ralph plunged into the rough draft and eventually wrote his way to a thesis. Unable to find a satisfactory focus during his search process, Joe quit. Joe's complaint about the research paper as not providing "short-term gratification" may be relevant here: Joe's failure to complete the assignment is closely tied to his inability to, in Kuhlthau's phrase, "sustain ambiguity" (221).

For Greg, Larry, and Ralph, deciding when to begin the rough draft posed no problem: Greg and Ralph had waited until shortly before the paper was due, whereas Larry needed to complete a draft early enough to get advice from Ms. Logan
before spring break. In contrast, because Jacki had completed her research by the end of January for a paper due in March, her decision to start writing required much effort:

It’s crazy, but I dream about this paper. I had mulled over the introduction for about a week, thinking about different angles, different approaches. I wanted to be dramatic. Scientists don’t tend to be dramatic or use scare tactics, but I wanted it to be something that would startle, so I thought about it for a long time. Then I just broke down and said, "You’ve just gotta do it. Quit thinking about it and just do it."

Like her organizing process, Jacki’s drafting process was highly recursive. Just as her organizing process shuttled between note cards and outlines, her first-draft process shuttled between writing, revising, and even re-outlining, as she completed two more outlines after she had begun the first draft but before she was finished revising. Again like her organizing process, her writing process demonstrated a dynamic interplay between thinking and writing.

Jacki began to write her rough draft more than four weeks before the paper was due in Dr. McDaniel’s class and more than two months before it was due in Dr. Norton’s class. She had already spent three weeks locating sources, taking notes, and organizing information; she ended up spending almost two more weeks writing her way to a completed draft. But by the time she had completed a draft, with Dr. McDaniel’s deadline still over two weeks away, she was virtually finished, right down to matters such as ellipses and the spacing of items on the Works Cited page. Thus, Jacki’s paper was not only already
structured before she began writing the first draft; it was also virtually completed by the time she finished that draft.

However, Jacki did revise, very extensively, while composing the first draft. By February 1 (Dr. McDaniel’s deadline was March 3), Jacki had two versions of the first four paragraphs: a version written in ink with crossouts on almost every line and sentences added in the margin, and a typed version which already looked like a section of an "A" paper. (These versions are reproduced as Appendices E and F on pages 685 and 686.) She explained:

I wrote the first two paragraphs pretty quickly. Then I got stuck, so while I was stuck I fine tuned it a little bit. I went back in and said, "Oh, I don’t want ‘around,’ I want ‘across,’” things like that. Then I buckled down and wrote the third and fourth paragraphs. Then I laid it down for about three hours and watched some TV and when I came back, I decided I wasn’t real happy with the third and fourth paragraphs. I’m still not. But after some fine tuning, I typed. That’s what I usually do, handwrite it and then go back and type it double-spaced so I can see clearly. By the time I get done with the handwritten version, as you can see, it’s almost illegible from all the cross-outs.

Jacki’s composing style places her within the group Maxine Hairston calls the "plodders"—writers who do most of their revising while composing the first draft itself (33). Unlike many "plodders," however, Jacki did not revise a given section during one composing session only; she repeatedly returned to sections and revised them during many composing sessions prior to completing an entire draft. In this respect, Jacki’s composing process strongly resembles the composing processes of the honors students completing senior theses, discussed in
Chapter Eight. Further research would be needed to determine whether this resemblance was coincidental, was simply a by-product of the fact that these students were completing longer, more complex texts than were other students in the sample, or was a distinguishing characteristic of highly competent student writers.

By February 10, Jacki’s formerly neatly typed pages were covered with white-out and inked-in additions as she further revised the opening paragraphs. (Of the 24 students in the sample, Jacki and Eric were the only ones who still used a typewriter rather than a word processor.) Although she still had not completed an entire draft, Jacki had already revised the opening with an eye for detail which borders on, in her words, the obsessive-compulsive:

I’ve changed this thing about three times. There’s one sentence in there I’ve changed about umpteen million times, and I’m still not satisfied with it. I had this first sentence, "Imagine for just a moment the world of the dinosaurs. Lush tropical forests, dense and thick, tangle their way across the surface of the earth." When my husband read it, he said I should change "world of the dinosaurs" because when you picture this in your brain, you see the animals instead of the landscape. I don’t want the focus to be on the animals; I want to focus on the landscape. So I changed the first sentence to, "Imagine for just a moment the environment of prehistoric earth."

The opening paragraph, in its revised form as of February 10, is reproduced as Appendix G on page 687.

Although still composing her first draft, Jacki was repeatedly rewording sentences and was taking her writing to a trusted peer for advice, behaviors many writers delay until
much later in their process. Jacki’s behavior demonstrates the recursiveness of the writing process—and the limitations of this study’s attempts to discuss first drafts and revision separately.

Besides having continued to revise her opening, by February 10 Jacki had also handwritten a draft of most of the rest of the paper—all but about the last 20%, when one compares the draft to the final copy. Again, the handwritten copy was full of crossouts, sometimes as much as seven lines long, and marginal additions. Most of this material was not typed, because Jacki’s typewriter was being repaired at this time.

Jackie stated that she would not reorder the paragraphs, because "I’ve already got my pattern, the cohesive flow of how I want the paper to be laid out," the structure having emerged during her organizing process prior to when she started to write the first draft. However, she was willing to cross out a paragraph and rewrite the material in a different way, sometimes incorporating some of the crossed-out wordings in the new version. An example of this revision tactic, taken from Jacki’s February 10 draft, is reproduced as Appendix H on page 688.

By February 10, Jacki knew she was approaching the conclusion to the essay. Having explained the problems caused by chlorofluorocarbons, she wished to discuss possible solutions. However, she faced difficult choices, in part
because she had represented her task as writing for an audience which extended beyond teacher-as-examiner:

I’ve probably got close to two thousand words right here. If I get super involved with the politics of passing an emissions treaty, it’ll be another whole section. And it’s like burnout time. I want to get this thing over with! I don’t want to get into a lot of political junk because to be completely honest, not much will probably come of it, anyway. Since the whole concept of my paper is for people to realize this is a problem, I guess I want to end by stressing individuals. But I want the ending to be dramatic, something that really grabs. And a call to action, "Oh, let’s all just do something," is kind of boring and mundane. They’ve heard it a million times.

This statement of Jacki’s supports the views of task representation expressed by Linda Flower and John Hayes. Discussing the results of a study they had conducted of college students completing a writing task, Flower and Hayes write that "one of the most telling differences between good and poor writers was the degree to which they created a unique, fully-developed representation of [the] unique rhetorical problem" implicit in the writing task (25). In Flower and Hayes’s study, the single variable most dramatically separating stronger writers from weaker ones was the stronger writers’ greater concern with audience, causing Flower and Hayes to conclude that "setting up goals to affect a reader is not only a reasonable act, but a powerful strategy for generating new ideas and exploring ... a topic" (30). Similarly, her repertoire of strategies for concluding the essay was increased by her sense of an audience of potentially concerned citizens, in contrast to the other students’
audience of exclusively teacher-as-examiner.

Eventually, however, Jacki rejected the idea of ending the paper with a call to individual action. By February 13, she had completed her first draft by juxtaposing material about obstacles to an international solution with a conclusion reiterating the gravity of the situation. The opening pages had been retyped, this time single-spaced on a different typewriter. The remainder of the paper and the Works Cited page were handwritten in ink, with relatively few crossouts and whited-out changes. The generally neat appearance of this draft belied the enormous effort and multitudinous revisions behind it.

Revision

Of the five research papers produced by the students discussed in this chapter—two papers by Greg and one apiece by Larry, Ralph, and Jacki—Greg's and Jacki's rough drafts, as well as part of Larry's rough draft, were available for examination. Ralph had lost his draft and had erased the disk on which he had composed it, but his interviews provide some insight into his revision process. Once again, the students' revision processes are in keeping with their behavior throughout the research-paper process.

Greg displayed minimal commitment to the task. He stated that for both papers, he began typing his final copy immediately after completing his rough draft. He also stated that he typed both papers while listening to heavy-metal music
and talking on the telephone with friends, with the telephone held between jaw and shoulder to keep his hands free for typing.

Whether or not Greg actually typed his final copies under the conditions he described, he certainly did not give much thought to revision of either paper. If one discounts obvious typographical errors in which Greg simply omitted a word, then 63 of the 68 sentences in his sociology paper are worded identically in the draft and in the final copy. Four contain single-word changes, while in one sentence a five-word phrase has been added. Of the 86 sentences in the rough draft of Greg’s English paper, one has been omitted, perhaps accidentally, from the final copy, while part of another has been omitted in an obvious typographical error, with the remainder of the sentence ungrammatically joined to the previous sentence from the rough draft. Of the remaining 83 sentences, again excluding obvious typographical-error changes, all but four are worded identically in the rough draft and the final copy, with the four divided evenly between one-word and two-word changes. Granted, in both papers over one-third of the sentences have had spelling or punctuation changes; but over two-thirds of these changes add errors rather than correct them, in most cases because a failure to proofread left the paper with numerous typographical errors. Greg’s most common alteration by far from rough draft to final copy is to add one or more typographical errors to a sentence.
For instance, in the paper for Ms. Logan, the rough draft’s "Iago hates Cassio and uses Roderigo to try and wreak his revenge" becomes the final copy’s "Iago hates Cassio and uses Roderigo to try and wreak revenge."

Although the handwritten paragraphs Larry added to his paper at Ms. Logan’s suggestion are unavailable, the rough draft he showed to Ms. Logan is available. Sixty percent of the sentences from that draft are found, worded identically, in the final copy, although in some cases punctuation errors have been corrected or typographical errors added in the final copy. Asked about revision of the paragraphs he added later, Larry said, "I changed some things—all my errors, punctuation, spelling." Evidently, Larry rarely rewords sentences of his own will.

The final copy does, however, contain some rather large-scale changes from the rough draft shown to Ms. Logan: a five-sentence section from the rough draft has been deleted, and in two other places, an end-of-paragraph sentence has been deleted and a different sentence added to replace it. However, the red-ink marks on the rough draft indicate that the five-sentence deletion came not from Larry’s initiative, but from Ms. Logan’s suggestions. Conceivably, then, the two end-of-paragraph sentence changes may also have been suggested by Ms. Logan—perhaps in the form of advice about transitions.

Unfortunately, when Ms. Logan requested elaboration rather than deletion or rewording, Larry had problems. For
example, in the rough draft, Larry had written:

   Hemingway’s fear of women was brought out mainly in
   his preference for the Anglo Saxon women. Maria in
   this story is Hemingways’ ideal woman. Maria has
   went through alot of abuse in the Spanish Civil War.

After this passage, Larry had concluded the paragraph with a
long quotation from one of his sources. Ms. Logan corrected
"has went" to "has gone" and wrote "discuss more" beside
Larry’s sentences about Maria. The final copy reads:

   Hemingway’s fear of women was brought out mainly in
   his preference for the Anglo Saxon women. Maria is
   Anglo Saxon is Hemingway’s ideal women. Maria has
   gone through alot of abuse in the Spanish Civil War.

The paragraph then concludes with the same long quotation
found in the rough draft. While Larry was able to follow
directions in changing "has went" to "has gone," his sole
response to Ms. Logan’s request to "discuss more" was to add
the words "is Anglo Saxon"—words which add a factual error
and simultaneously undermine the sentence’s syntax.

While Larry’s syntactic difficulties are hard to explain,
his conceptual difficulties with the request to "discuss more"
are easily understood: he had never read For Whom the Bell
Tolls or anything else by Ernest Hemingway, and in fact his
paper gives no indication that he knew which of the works he
discussed are novels and which are short stories. (Of course,
Ms. Logan had not encouraged Larry to read works by Hemingway,
any more than she had encouraged the other class members to
read the works about which they were writing.) Larry could
not "discuss more" for the simple reason that he knew nothing
about the topic. Since his secondary source said little more about Maria, Larry could not have learned about her without either finding another source on his own or reading *For Whom the Bell Tolls* himself, acts requiring a level of initiative Larry never showed at any time during the study. In short, revision for Larry seems to be largely a matter of following directions—preferably easy-to-follow directions.

Although Ralph’s rough draft was unavailable, his "island-hopping" method of composing that draft suggests that he made large-scale changes during revision, in paragraph order if in nothing else. He also said, "The first paragraph was the hardest thing. I revised it several times because I wanted it to cover everything I’d do in the paper, and the paper kept changing." In a way, this statement reminds one of Jacki’s procedure of continuing to change the introduction while she worked her way toward the end of her paper. However, an important difference exists: Ralph evidently changed his introduction in response to changes in his paper’s structure, while Jacki’s introduction was not intended to reflect her paper’s structure, and in fact Jacki’s finished paper kept the same structure found in her outline. Ralph’s comment might, however, help to explain why some of Ms. Kramer’s students, discussed in Chapter Six, revised their openings more extensively than they revised any other parts of their papers.
Because Jacki revised so heavily while writing her first draft, her revision processes have already been discussed in this chapter's "First Draft" section. Even after her exhaustive process of completing the first draft, however, Jacki continued to seek to improve the paper. While Greg definitely and Ralph apparently did not show their rough drafts to anyone, and while Larry showed his draft only to Ms. Logan, Jacki sought as many readers for her draft as she could find, perhaps in keeping with her definition of the audience as extending beyond teacher-as-examiner. Her husband, who had already been reading sections of the draft as it evolved, now read the entire paper; Jacki asked a classmate to take a look, saying when interviewed that she chose that particular classmate because the classmate "seems like a pretty intelligent person"; Jacki showed the paper to me, one of only two students in the 24-student sample to do so prior to turning in the final draft; and last of all, she showed the paper to Dr. Norton. "I get it into as many hands as I can get it into," she said. "Does anybody want to read this? Please?"

Moreover, Jacki was not content simply to hand the paper over and wait for an undirected response. At the top of the first page of her draft were questions for readers, ranging from large-scale matters ("Does the paper flow logically to its conclusion? Is the conclusion appropriate?") to proofreading details ("Are all numeric terms properly
hyphenated? Are commas and ellipses used correctly with quotations?""). Despite Jacki's systematic attempts to detect any possible flaws in the paper, however, her meticulous work had resulted in a first draft so good that her readers, myself included, could say little but to suggest minor wording changes and to congratulate her on a job well done.

By the time she showed the paper to Dr. Norton, Jacki had only two specific concerns: how to cite when one source quotes or paraphrases another, and whether or not a certain passage contained a sentence fragment. Jacki had written:

This report suggests that damage to DNA would ultimately end in cell mutation, neoplastic transformation, or death. None of which sounds very optimistic for humans.

Stylistically, Jacki liked "None of which sounds very optimistic for humans," and she intended to keep this wording in the version of the paper she would submit to Dr. McDaniel. However, she knew from experience Dr. Norton's attitude toward sentence fragments: when Jacki had handed in another essay containing a sentence fragment, Dr. Norton had deducted ten points and had written in the margin, "Your sentence fragment shocked and depressed me. Surely this was a careless error." Thus, if Dr. Norton declared the "None of which" wording to be a sentence fragment, Jacki would reword the passage in the version she would submit to Dr. Norton--the only difference she planned in the versions submitted to the two teachers. Dr. Norton, however, declared that the wording was a complete sentence, with "none" as subject and "sounds promising" as
predicate. So Jacki submitted exactly the same paper to both teachers.

Thus, although Jacki sought many readers of her rough draft, the changes she made between rough draft and final copy were limited to a few rewordings of sentences and corrections of punctuation. For Jacki, all the major work came in the early steps.

Feelings Upon Completion

The students expressed various feelings about having completed the paper, but relief was the dominant one. After she had typed up the final copy of her paper, Jacki said, "It's a relief to have it all done."

Larry combined relief with speculation about the grade. "I hope to get a B, but I'll probably get a C," he said. "I'm just glad to see composition go away."

Greg said, remarkably enough, that he considered his sociology paper to be a good paper and that he expected to receive a good grade. Perhaps because he considered English teachers to be more demanding, however, he seemed less certain about his English paper, saying, "I feel pretty good about it. It's maybe not 'A' good, but maybe 'B' or 'C+' good. But you never know what goes on in the minds of English teachers." His instinct that his sociology paper would probably receive the higher grade of the two turned out to be accurate.

Ralph expressed the most complex emotions about finishing. He said,
It was a load off my mind. I'd been hearing a voice in my mind saying, "You've gotta finish that research paper!" And even after I was done, I'd keep on hearing it every so often. And I'd get all worried, and then I'd remember, "Oh--I'm done." I felt good that it was done, but not as excited as usual. I didn't celebrate or anything. I kept thinking, "If you'd have just started three weeks ago, it would've been a lot better." I don't know why I torture myself with these deadline struggles.

**Finished Papers, Grades, and Comments**

**The Finished Papers**

The opening that Jacki worked so hard to make dramatic really is dramatic:

Imagine for just a moment the environment of prehistoric earth. Lush tropical forests, dense and thick, tangle their way across the surface. Temperatures, warm and balmy, bring stifling humidity to blanket the land. To some this may seem like paradise. But during this time other parts of the world would be abandoned to desert. Higher temperatures and shifting weather patterns would foretell of drought and widespread crop failure (Gribbin 97-100). Multitudes of people would be uprooted, left with no choice but to become environmental refugees (Lemonick, "Heat" 37). Unfortunately, this is not far from reality. According to the scientific community a worldwide climatic warming could occur by the twenty-first century. If the stratosphere continues to be destroyed at current levels, this will ultimately be mankind's fate (Gribbin 97). Indeed, this "has the potential to alter life on this planet" (Grove 512).

The rest of Jacki's paper, while not as dramatic as the opening, reflects her understanding of difficult concepts such as the chemistry behind ozone formation and depletion, the climatic and geographic effects of ozone depletion, and the political complexities obstructing international environmental cooperation. In addition, Jacki explains these complex concepts in ways any reasonably intelligent adult can
understand, even while she maintains the somewhat formal tone generally expected in scholarly discourse. Her intense concern with organization has paid off in a scrupulously unified paper with smooth transitions. Jacki also synthesizes material, regularly combining information from several different sources to make a single point. Most of the qualities mentioned in the four preceding sentences may be observed in the following two-paragraph excerpt from the third page of Jacki’s paper:

Once CFCs [chlorofluorocarbons] reach the stratosphere they are broken apart by the same radiation that breaks apart the O₂ molecule. The irony is that once a chlorine atom is released in this manner, it is then free to attack and break apart ozone molecules, which it proceeds to do with military efficiency (Gribbin 46-8). Chlorine is so destructive that Sherry Rowland of the University of California at Irvine estimates one atom of Chlorine can obliterate 100,000 molecules of ozone before it becomes stable once again and falls from the sky (Gribbin 59). This link between CFCs and the depletion of the ozone is evident. As scientists have discovered, wherever ozone layers have dropped, high amounts of CFC chemical concentrations have been found ("Ozone" 12). The frightening reality is that virtually all CFCs ever released are still present and inflicting damage in the atmosphere (Gribbin 47).

The effect of billions of tons of CFCs in the stratosphere is twofold. First, they destroy the ozone’s reflecting capability. Because CFCs break apart O₃ molecules, there is less ozone to block the sun’s rays. Hence, more ultraviolet radiation now reaches the earth’s surface (Gribbin 17). Second, because CFC molecules act as better insulation, the heat radiated from the earth is trapped near the surface. This causes global warming and generates the greenhouse effect (Lemonick, "Danger" 42). But we will look at each of these problems individually.

In addition to the strengths already mentioned, the essay is almost entirely free of errors in spelling, punctuation,
and grammar, and adheres to MLA format meticulously. Cited
information and quotations invariably may be found on the
cited pages, and other than an accidental copying of a single
eight-word phrase, the paper is free from plagiarism.
(Disturbingly, of the 15 other papers by Basic Writers and
First-Year Composition Students available for examination in
this study, only Ann’s paper, an essay which contains only a
few citations and which is discussed in Chapter Four, even
comes close to this level of providing complete, accurate
citation information while avoiding plagiarism.)

Jacki’s paper is not perfect, of course. It contains no
wholly original analysis (although it is hard to imagine what
original analysis any first-year college student could
contribute on this topic); one article on the Works Cited page
is listed as coming from the April 1988 issue of a magazine
when in fact it comes from the April 1987 issue, a detail
which could prevent a reader from finding the source; and a
few pronouns could have clearer antecedents, as in Jacki’s
uses of “this” in the last two sentences of the first
paragraph. Nevertheless, the quality of Jacki’s paper is
demonstrated by the fact that Edward P.J. Corbett and Sheryl
L. Finkle selected Jacki’s paper to serve as their sample
research paper in the sixth edition of The Little English
Handbook. Thus, Jacki’s paper reached the wider audience she
had envisioned for it all along.
Ralph's paper is much more like the research papers First-Year Composition teachers are accustomed to receiving: a mixture of impressive strengths and serious problems. Among the strengths, all of the material relates to a central thesis, and the paper contains original thought in the final page, where Ralph correlates people and events from Hugo's life with people and events from Les Miserables, correlations not found in his sources:

Each character in Les Miserables reflects different aspects of Hugo's life. Les Miserables was written "about an outcast by an outcast" (Hofstadter 77). Jean Valjean, like Hugo, was unjustly condemned. Hugo's exile paralleled Valjean's imprisonment, in that both men remained confined for nineteen years (Cosper 537). Marius, a young scholar who wished to free the people of France from its ruthless monarchy used his sword, while Hugo used his pen to achieve the same goal.

While Cosner (on page 538, not page 537, as Ralph's citation indicates) mentions Hugo's nineteen-year exile, Ralph is responsible for linking this with Jean Valjean's exile, as well as for the comparison in the final quoted sentence. Thus, Ralph briefly goes beyond simply restating information from his sources. In addition, the Works Cited page and parenthetical citations are almost wholly in standard form, and the slight inaccuracy in the above citation notwithstanding, almost ninety percent of the cited ideas and quotations do in fact appear on the pages indicated by the citations. The sentences convey the paper's ideas clearly, and although the paper averages about three errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page, most are no more
distracting than the missing comma after "monarchy" in the final sentence of the above quotation.

Unfortunately, Ralph includes almost no transitional sentences or sentences tying subtopics to the overall thesis. As a result, the paper almost seems to be composed of several mini-essays, all related to the thesis but not necessarily related to one another, and following one another in no particular order. For instance, on page five of the six-page essay, Ralph follows a paragraph about Hugo's financial success as a writer with the following:

Victor Marie Hugo was born on February 26, 1802, in Besancon France. He moved frequently because his father, Joseph Hugo, was in the service. Hugo and his family moved from Germany to Italy and from Italy to Spain.

It is hard to explain why such seemingly-introductory material should be placed near the end of a paper which has dealt with Hugo from the beginning.

The above quotation demonstrates another problem with Ralph's paper: it contains factual errors. Although Hugo's father moved frequently, the rest of the family did not move along with him. The paper contains a number of other factual errors, the result of problems in notetaking. For example, according to Ralph's source, Hugo's parents disapproved of Hugo's plans to marry Adele Foucher; according to Ralph's notes, "the parents" disapproved; and according to Ralph's paper, her parents disapproved. In one instance, the factual difficulty involves quoting a source's words fairly
accurately, but distorting that source's meaning. A passage from George Harper's *Masters of French Literature* reads:

Those who admire force and those who admire strength will never have done disputing over the value of Victor Hugo's work. To the former . . . he is nothing short of godlike. To the latter, whom perfection allures more than power compels, and who know that restraint is an essential quality in perfect art, he is not necessarily and obviously "the greatest poet of our age." (169)

But Ralph's notes and his paper both handle the quotation as follows:

George Harper, an authority on France's literary giants, describes Hugo as, "nothing short of godlike . . . whom perfection allures more than power compels, and who knows that restraint is an essential quality in perfect art, he is necessarily and obviously the greatest poet of our age" (169).

Although Ralph changes Harper's words only slightly, he distorts Harper's meaning by applying to Hugo words intended to describe readers and by changing what in the original seems an ironic, understated criticism of Hugo to what in the paper seems bombastic praise of Hugo.

Ralph's loose notetaking habits also account for another problem in his paper: various passages, totalling about one page of the six-page paper, are copied more or less verbatim from sources without quotation marks. As with Naomi's plagiarism in Chapter Four, Ralph's plagiarism is probably unintentional, since parenthetical citations lead directly to the plagiarized passages.

Ralph's self-assessment is probably correct: if he had started earlier, he would have had a better paper. With some
checking and revising, Ralph could have made this paper into a very good student essay.

Larry's paper seems less promising, although it does contain certain strengths. It, too, is unified around a thesis and contains citations which largely adhere in appearance to MLA format. More noticeable, however, are the paper's limitations. Although Larry has taken Ms. Logan's advice, supplementing material about Hemingway's portrayals of women in fiction with material about real-life women in Hemingway's life, it does not seem to have occurred to Larry to suggest that experiences with real-life women may have influenced the ways that Hemingway portrayed women in fiction. (Again, as with Marcia's difficulty interpreting the topic "The Women in Poe's Life," the correlation an author's life to that author's works, so obvious to a literature specialist that there seems to be no need to mention it to the student as part of the task, does not seem to have been at all obvious to the student.) Thus, as with Ralph's paper, Larry's paper almost seems to be composed of more than one mini-essay, with all mini-essays supporting a single thesis but with no connections established between any two mini-essays. Like Ralph, Larry has problems accurately drawing information from his sources, as when he turns a source's statement that Hemingway's parents had "opposite interests" into his paper's statement that "Ernest and his mother had opposite interests." However, Larry knows far less about Hemingway than Ralph knows
about Hugo, and Larry does not include (whether or not he is capable of including) original analysis, as Ralph briefly does. As stated earlier, Larry's wordings ("In Hemingway's story, Mr. and Mrs. Elliot . . .", "In Hemingway's story The Sun Also Rises") suggest that he does not even know when he is discussing a short story and when he is discussing a novel. Like Ralph, Larry occasionally drifts into plagiarism, although only for a combined total of about three or four sentences; but whereas Ralph's own sentences are always clear and occasionally graceful, Larry's tend to consist of short, flat clauses joined by "and" or "but" (but lacking the jarring undercurrent which Hemingway often achieved from such a sentence structure), as may be seen in the following excerpt:

The last important women in Hemingway's life is Hadley Richardson. Again the woman is older than Ernest and was willing to use her resources to support him. Ernest married Hadley and she raised his first son. Hadley and Ernest loved each other deeply but they grew apart throughout the years. The couple got a divorce and no hard feelings from either party were exchanged. Like others, Hadley could manage fine without Ernest. (Gladstein 108)

Even with this simplistic sentence structure, the paper averages between seven and eight errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page, including highly noticeable lapses such as the wording "a moral code that is broke."

Furthermore, out of the eleven citations in Larry's paper, only one actually leads the reader to the page where the cited information originated. For example, page 108 of Mimi Gladstein's The Indestructible Women in Faulkner, Hemingway,
and Steinbeck contains none of the information from Larry's passage quoted above.

The problems in Greg's two research papers are even more noticeable than those in Larry's paper. The sociology paper entirely lacks a coherent structure. For example, its final sentence, reproduced exactly as it appears in the paper, is "There were 35 gang related murders in Dallas last year and twelve so far this year." Yet prior to this sentence, Dallas has not even been mentioned in the paper. (Besides the structural problem, the sentence contains no citation and in fact turns out to be based on information from an article published the previous year, making the references to "last year" and "this year" inaccurate.) Almost a page of the just-over-four-page paper is given over to simple lists--sentences such as this one, again reproduced exactly as in the paper, other than the two bracketed words:

The places they [Jamaican gangs] are spread to include Miami, Atlanta, New York City, Bosyon, Chicago, Houston, Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Anchorage as well as numerous cities in Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas.

While the list does convey information, Greg's primary purpose in extending the list may have been to help the essay achieve the required length. In addition, only about half of the citations in the paper actually lead the reader to the pages from which the cited information comes, and much information that should be cited is not. (Of course, because
Greg's research covered only eight pages' worth of reading, the incorrectly cited or uncited information is not hard to find.) The essay contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar at a rate of over ten per page, close to the average found in most of the papers by the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four. Many the errors in the paper are highly noticeable, including frequent subject-verb disagreements such as "There was twenty drug-related homicides within eighteen months."

Greg's Iago paper at first seems to be unified in that the introduction and conclusion both stress the same points, at times using almost identical wordings—a stylistic device often encountered in five-paragraph themes. In between, however, over half of the paper is devoted to a series of paragraphs describing the various characters in Othello and summarizing plot with little or no attempt to correlate the material with the paper's ostensible topic—-Iago's villainy. In Greg's already-discussed outline, the lack of unity in this section is not apparent, because the characters are listed as subtopics within a section headed "Attitude," while the outline's thesis statement, reproduced exactly from the outline, is "The expertise in the creation of Iago can be explained by his motivation, his attitude towards the other characters, and his villainy." Thus, the outline suggests that the essay will contain a series of paragraphs about Iago's attitudes toward the other characters, not paragraphs
simply describing the characters and their functions within the plot. Instead, here is a typical paragraph from this section of the paper, reproduced exactly:

Emilia is an important character in the play. Emilia is Iago's wife. She is outspoken and is cynical towards male gender due to the fact that she has spent many years living with her husband. The reader can tell by Iago's immense jealousy and absurd suspicions of her having affairs with Cassio and Othello that she is an extremely beautiful woman. She is a good faithful woman who does not even suspect Iago of having the evil plans that corrupt his mind. Iago, throughout the play shows a great amount of anger and impatience with her and mentions jealousy often. This anger and impatience finally causes him to take the life of his own wife at the end of the play. But as Emilia is dying, she manages to convince Othello that his dear wife had always been faithful.

Almost half of the paper consists of similar paragraphs, paragraphs describing characters and summarizing plot without particularly relating to the concept of Iago as villain. Asked why he included these paragraphs, Greg replied, "To take up space. It was all I could think of to write."

Besides the problem with unity, the essay contains no parenthetical or other textual citations, even though it contains a Works Cited page. ("Do you think she might count off for that?" Greg asked me after he had turned the paper in.) Finally, the essay contains an average of one error in spelling, punctuation, or grammar per sentence, or close to twenty per page, the highest number encountered in any paper in the sample, including those written by the Basic Writers in Chapter Four. This average results in part because of Greg's failure to proofread for typographical errors.
The students' varying task representations may be discerned even in their approaches to the minimum length and number of sources for their papers. Asked by Dr. Norton to write a 1000 to 2000-word paper citing at least three sources and asked by Dr. McDaniel to write a five-page paper citing at least four sources, Jacki far exceeded these minimums, writing a six-and-a-half page, 1800-plus-word paper that cites twelve sources. Asked by Ms. Logan to write a 1200-to-1500-word paper citing at least four sources, Ralph, Larry, and Greg all struggled to reach the minimum: their papers range from about 1170 words (Greg's) to almost exactly 1200 words (Ralph's), and their Works Cited pages all cite exactly four sources. Greg, however, included no parenthetical citations and seems to have used only one of the four sources he cites: Cliff's Notes to _Othello_. Finally, asked by Dr. McDaniel to write a five-page paper citing four sources, Greg wrote a paper that extends eight lines into a fifth page and that cites four sources while involving only eight pages of reading: a seven-page article, two half-page sidebars inserted within the longer article's seven pages, and another article from which Greg used only the opening paragraph.

**Grades and Written Comments**

Although readers may be surprised by some of the grades these papers received, the grades are less surprising than those received by papers described in other chapters of this study. More interesting are the written comments—or rather,
more interesting is the absence of written comments—on Jacki’s paper.

Jacki’s paper received A’s from both Dr. Norton and Dr. McDaniel. Greg’s gang-violence paper received a B+ from Dr. McDaniel, but his Iago paper received an F from Ms. Logan. Ralph’s paper received a B and Larry’s received a B−, both from Ms. Logan.

More specifically, Jacki received a 108 from Dr. Norton, losing two points for failing to hyphenate "seven year span" and getting two five-point bonuses, one for handing in the paper roughly a month early and one for taking part in this study. Other than "-2" written in the margin beside a hyphen she had added to "seven-year," and "5 pts.—Sutton’s research, 5 pts. early—108" on the title page, Dr. Norton wrote nothing on the paper.

Dr. McDaniel wrote even less on Jacki’s paper: the only marks he made on the paper were the digits of a red-inked "99," in small letters, in the upper left-hand corner of the title page.

While research suggests that written final-draft comments do little to improve student writing (Hillocks 165), surely student writing deserves some written comments, especially when the student has obviously worked so hard and when there is such an opportunity for praising student work. In her final interview, Jacki said:
It’s kind of weird--no comments at all. I looked it over three times to see if there was something I missed--a spelling error corrected, an "Are you sure about this?" in the margin, anything. But there’s nothing.

Dr. McDaniel responded to Greg’s paper in similar fashion: although he wrote "91" on the first page and circled a few of the paper’s many errors, he wrote no comments as such on the paper. In contrast to Jacki, Greg viewed this silence as golden. "I took that as a good sign," he said. "If he didn’t have nothing bad to say, that’s great."

Ms. Logan was less laconic in her written responses. On the last page of Greg’s paper, along with "60" (65 was the lowest possible passing grade), she wrote 47 words of criticism, noting the paper’s lack of citations, the failure to correlate many paragraphs to the paper’s main topic, and a failure to develop the thesis. Marginal comments consist of 37 words of further criticism, mostly covering the same points as the final-page criticism, along with numbers coding errors to chapters in the class’s handbook.

In his final interview, Greg’s response to the grade and comments was, "I don’t care. I’d have liked to have done better, but I can live with it. It’s my fault. No problem."

When interviewed, Ms. Logan stressed that although the 60 was an F, it was a high enough F that Greg’s grade for the semester need not be ruined. (In fact, Greg ended up receiving a C in the course.) She also stated, "Greg had obviously copied from his sources. Now, I don’t check
sources. I simply do not have time. But it was pretty much copying from Cliff's Notes or something like that." But a source check revealed that although Greg had probably used a few ideas from character descriptions found in Cliff's Notes, his wordings did not come from Cliff's Notes--nor from any other works he cited or any similar "study guides." In fact, Ms. Logan had devoted a week to having her students watch a videotape of Othello--a practice suggesting the true focus of the class--and given that Greg's paper contains little besides character descriptions and plot summary, he could have gotten all of his paper's information simply by viewing the videotape.

On the last page of Larry's paper, beside an "83," Ms. Logan wrote, "Need to tie in women in his life more specifically with women in his stories." Her marginal comments totalled 33 words of criticism, mostly on technical points ("Avoid verbs in topic outline"), along with handbook chapter numbers beside errors.

Of Larry, Ms. Logan said, "He's not a strong student under any circumstances. But he worked with me through the stages, and he honestly tried. And a lot of things I suggested, I would see him using them to the best of his ability." Ms. Logan seemed to be explaining why she had given what she apparently considered a rather generous grade.

Larry viewed matters somewhat differently. "I thought I'd probably do a little better," he said. "But I really
don't care. This is the last one. I'm happy just to take an 83 and forget about research papers."

Along with "85" on the final page of Ralph's paper, Ms. Logan had written "Needed more emphasis on his [Hugo's] works"—suggesting that although Ralph had abandoned the idea of writing about Les Mis, in Ms. Logan's eyes his approach was still insufficiently literature-centered. In the margins, along with handbook chapter-numbers, are 35 words of criticism, including the comment "You seem to be relying too much on your source for wording here," written beside a passage that is, indeed, plagiarized.

Ralph's response was, "I wanted better, but I got what I deserved. I got what I put into it."

Not one of the papers received any praise whatsoever in the teachers' written comments. All of the comments fell into one of two categories: criticism and corrections of errors. Granted, there was little to praise in some of the papers; nevertheless, even this small sample suggests that some teachers have yet to incorporate written praise into their teaching repertoire.

Conclusions

Before drawing conclusions, we must again recall the possible bias in the sample of students discussed in this chapter. Greg, Joe, Larry, and Ralph were recruited through a message which described procrastinators and those who did not particularly like research-paper assignments as being
especially welcome; this circumstance may limit the extent to which the students’ difficulties may be generalized as evidence of drawbacks in certain kinds of assignments and certain kinds of teaching methods.

Nevertheless, that the realities of volunteerism suggest that the remainder of the sample may contain a bias favoring highly competent, eager-to-please students, Larry, Greg, and Joe may be more representative of typical composition students than are most other members of the sample. Certainly in terms of college GPA, the three were all closer to the community college’s median and mean than were dream-student Jacki or even pretty-good-student Ralph. The data from Larry, Greg, and Joe may be more applicable than many teachers are prepared to admit. The conclusions which follow operate on that assumption.

This chapter confirms what experienced teachers already know: students bring to our classrooms an astonishing range in abilities, and even more, an astonishing range in work habits. These ranges are especially wide in open-door community colleges. It is difficult to envision Greg and Jacki occupying the same universe, let alone taking the same courses. Community college teachers must be resourceful indeed to cope with such a range of students within a single classroom.

Dr. McDaniel’s role in the study confirms another point that experienced writing teachers already know: that writing
requirements in the subject areas do not necessarily result in writing instruction in the subject areas.

The chapter also supports views put forth by various other writing theorists. For example, Joe's decision to give up on the assignment, especially when juxtaposed with the relative success Ralph achieved through persistence and adaptability in the face of disappointments during his search process, supports Mike Rose's claim that inflexible attitudes toward the writing process can lead to deadline difficulties and also supports Carol Kuhlthau's emphasis on the need to adjust the paper's focus to accommodate material encountered during the search process (221). Unwilling to adapt, Joe refused to complete the paper when he became convinced it could not earn a good grade, saying, "I don't want to take a C or even a D in the course when I know I could make an A if I tried. So I'll just take the class another time." Three years later, Joe has not yet returned to the community college to take the composition class or any other class.

Jacki's process of completing the assignment, especially when juxtaposed with the processes of the other four students, supports Flower and Hayes's assertion that good writers create a more "unique, fully-developed representation of [the] unique rhetorical problem" implicit in any writing assignment (25). In many ways, but especially in her approach to audience, Jacki had defined the task much more ambitiously than had the other students. Jacki's process also supports Stotsky's view
that focus formulation in research papers occurs prior to the writing of the first draft, through "categorizing, organizing, recategorizing, and reorganizing" ("On Developing" 207). The other students' processes, however, did not always particularly fit with Stotsky's view. Conceivably, Stotsky's portrayal of focus formulation applies mainly to those students who fit Flower and Hayes's description of good writers, those who develop full representations of the writing task's rhetorical situation. Other students—meaning, probably, most First-Year Composition students—truncate the search process too radically for a focus to emerge through their reworking of ideas prior to starting the first draft.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the chapter suggests that serious problems can result when literature specialists are allowed to make literature the sole subject of essays in composition classes. Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan encouraged their students to select topics from lists more suitable for people with graduate degrees in literary studies—that is, for people like Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan—than for First-Year Composition students at an open-admissions institution. Having encouraged the students to write about topics about which the students cared little and knew less, the teachers had little choice but to simplify the task, defining the paper as a non-analytical report to be completed, in the case of Ms. Logan's students, through reliance on Masterplots and similar reference tools rather than through encountering the texts
which were to be the subjects of the papers.

In Larry's case, Ms. Logan went much further to simplify matters. In her review of published studies of the research process, Sandra Stotsky isolates what may be the four most crucial tasks in an open-ended research assignment: selecting a topic of interest, generating questions to pursue about the topic, locating seemingly relevant information, and generating a working hypothesis, controlling idea, or point of view to govern the rest of the search and the final organization of the information.

("On Developing" 197-98)

Larry was unable or unwilling to perform any of these four tasks—and Ms. Logan was willing to perform all four tasks for him, directly or through surrogates. As a result, Ms. Logan was spared the unpleasantness of failing Larry. But Larry's passing grade in a course requiring a research paper is misleading, an official statement that he possesses independent skills and work habits which he does not, in fact, possess.

Worse, such treatment, especially when combined with the other ways the topic was simplified and with the passive roles students are encouraged to accept through the "banking methods" of traditionalist teachers, may eventually create a welfare mentality in students. Asked at the end of his final interview if he had anything he wished to add, Larry said,

I think it should be covered better about exactly what you should do. When you go to a teacher and show them your rough draft, they should show you exactly what you need to do to get, say, an A or a B or whatever. I did the paper just like she said to do it. And at the end here, she writes, "Need to tie women in his life more specifically with women
in the stories." If you're coming by and taking your time out because you want to do good, they should take time out and show you what you should do, you know?

Larry's remarkable belief that Ms. Logan had not helped him with the paper enough is symptomatic of his equally remarkable views of college standards, especially regarding the research paper. Still at the end of his final interview, in response to being asked if there was anything else he would like to add, Larry stated:

I think research papers should be smaller--two or three sources and about 800 words, instead of these long ones. [Larry had been assigned a 1200-word, four-source minimum.] In these long ones, you get a lot of B.S.-ing. It's hard to focus on one point when you've got all that big writing. She wants it long, and then she says, "You need to tie it in more." If I did that, made it beam in on one area, it'd be only 300 words.

Given the help Larry received in choosing a topic, finding sources, selecting information from his sources, choosing a thesis, and structuring his paper, and given the wealth of available information about Hemingway's treatment of real and fictional women, 1200 words of unified discourse on this topic may not seem an exorbitant requirement. More important than the paper's length, though, is Larry's attitude. In earlier interviews, Larry expressed bitterness over being "just passed along" in high school without being required to learn to write, blaming lax high school requirements for his having to take two semesters of Basic Writing in college. Yet he ended his final interview by arguing that standards in college-level English should be
lowered to a level he could achieve without strain.

Literature specialists' love for requiring students to write on literary topics, combined with the passivity and dependence bred into students by traditional methods of instruction, may in part explain the continued omnipresence of the five-paragraph theme, as well as the frequent presence of sentences-per-paragraph formulae, in the community college, as well as in the surrounding high schools. In a narrow sense, the format seems perfect for students like Larry, students who demand simple tasks and step-by-step instruction in completing those tasks; students like Greg, students who devote only a minimum of time, and very little of their concentration even during that minimal time, to any writing assignment; and students like Joe, students who may fail less structured assignments because they choose inappropriate methods when left to their own devices. True, the format precludes many goals of writing instruction: students are encouraged to view ideas only as slot-fillers in a pre-established form rather than to view form as a vehicle for ideas, and students gain no experience in inventing more than three points or elaborating a point beyond a single paragraph. But in classrooms where the Larries, Gregs, and Joes often outnumber the Jackis and even the Ralphs, ambitious goals for writing instruction may seem unattainable anyway. Certainly Ms. Logan, Dr. McDaniel, and Dr. Norton were not expecting great things from their students. One cannot, of course, know the extent to which the
teachers’ reductive definitions of writing assignments cause the students’ uninspired attitudes and behaviors, and the extent to which it is the other way around. In the end, the cause-effect issue may not matter much: what starts as a chicken-or-the-egg question becomes simply a vicious circle.

Given the discouraging quality of much student writing in classrooms filled with students such as Larry, Greg, and Joe, it is not surprising that many high school English classes emphasize literature to the virtual exclusion of composition and that many college English teachers—especially, as Shaughnessy noted, those forced by open-admissions policies to teach courses other than the literature courses they prefer—turn courses officially named "Composition" into literature courses. Not only are English teachers almost invariably trained primarily in composition rather than literature, but also, by switching the classroom focus to literature and lecturing, teachers may find respite from disturbing realities about their students’ attitudes and abilities, realities which become immediately apparent when the focus returns to the students’ writing. As some of Dr. Norton’s statements both in the classroom and in interviews make clear, some teachers find consideration of their students’ abilities to be a discouraging pastime.

During interviews, both Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan expressed discouragement regarding their lack of success in research-paper instruction. "Every year I try something
different with the research paper, and I've been doing it for almost forty years," Dr. Norton said. "But I've never really found a good way to do it."

And in a statement that perhaps should have come from Dr. McDaniel, Ms. Logan said, "I don't think we teach the research paper. We just assign it." Significantly, however, she then added,

But although I know I don't teach them enough of how to do the research paper, I don't know how to work it in. Comp Two has so much in it. They're learning about all three genres—fiction, poetry, and drama. And you can't expect them to write about a genre when they know nothing about it. You have to teach the genre first, and then you just don't have time to work in everything you'd like. Perhaps we should only cover two of the three genres.

If students must write on subjects "they know nothing about" except what the person who will grade their writing has attempted to deposit in their heads, and if there isn't time in a composition class to "work in" instruction related to the class's most ambitious writing assignment, then surely the students' chances for improving as writers are minimized. The most important works to be studied in composition classes are the works composed by the students.
Notes

1. These three were the only students in the entire study to withdraw. The students’ lack of enthusiasm for the research-paper assignment, combined with reluctance to acknowledge that lack of enthusiasm to a researcher whom they knew to be an English teacher, may have caused the attrition. However, simpler explanations seem more likely: two of the students who withdrew had very little time for interviews and observation, as they combined full-time jobs with full-time course loads; students discussed in this chapter were interviewed and observed over a longer period of time than those discussed in most other chapters, so that participation in the study required more staying power for those discussed in this chapter; and community-college students as a group have a high attrition rate for all school-related tasks.

2. Greg’s date, however, led to his arrest for contributing to the delinquency of a minor and a possible $500 fine and jail sentence of up to ninety days.
CHAPTER VI

SIX STUDENTS COMPOSING RESEARCH PAPERS
IN A WRITING-PROCESS-CENTERED FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION CLASS

While Chapters Four and Five focus on students at an open-admissions community college, Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight focus on students at a somewhat selective university. Therefore, a comparison of Chapters Four and Five with Chapters Six through Eight may demonstrate how the "campus climate for writing" (White 1) affects students as they complete research-paper assignments. In addition, while Chapter Five focuses on First-Year-Composition students who were in classes taught by traditional methods and who, for the most part, were required to write on literature-based topics, Chapter Six focuses on First-Year-Composition students who were in a class taught by non-traditional methods and who were allowed to choose topics related to their own interests. A comparison of these two chapters may demonstrate the effects of the teacher, the teaching methods, and the range of acceptable paper topics on students' research-paper experiences.

Chapter Six also examines one other variable: because the class described in this chapter took place during an intensive summer term in which a three-semester-hour course was crowded into a single month, this chapter focuses on the
processes of students who must complete a research-paper assignment within an extremely limited time frame.

The chapter describes background conditions affecting the students' work, discusses the students' processes of creating the papers, analyzes the finished products, and draws conclusions.

Background

The Institution

Enrollment at the University is moderately selective. In general, to enroll at the University, in-state students must possess either a high school grade-point average of B-minus or better, ACT or SAT scores in roughly the top fifty percent nationally, or both.

In contrast to the community college discussed in the previous two chapters, the University has a Director of Composition. At the time that the classes described in this study took place, the Director of Composition was a woman with a doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition, actively involved in disseminating information about recent research and theory in composition among the other faculty members at the University and among the area's secondary English teachers. Because most First-Year Composition classes at the University were taught by part-time faculty members, and because all part-time faculty members were required to take a course in Methods of Teaching Composition, taught by the Director of Composition, before the director would allow them to teach First-Year
Composition, the Director of Composition was able to maintain a considerable degree of control over the curriculum and teaching methods in the University's First-Year Composition classes.

The Course

While the community college's second semester of First-Year Composition focused on literature, the University's second semester of First-Year Composition focused on writing the research paper. The departmental syllabus required students to write only three graded essays out of class during the semester--but all three were to be research papers, each five to seven pages long, and each citing at least ten sources.

Sample Selection

As discussed in Chapter Three, the class described in this chapter was selected because its teacher, identified in this study by the pseudonym Ms. Kramer, was recommended by the University's Director of Composition as an exemplary non-traditional teacher. I sought to juxtapose students' experiences in a classroom taught by such a teacher with students' experiences in classes taught by highly-regarded traditional teachers such as those described in Chapter Five. A class during the abbreviated semester was selected because this was the only First-Year Composition class Ms. Kramer was teaching at a time when my schedule permitted me to work with her students.
Methods of selecting students from Ms. Kramer's class for the sample are described on pages 88 and 89 of this study. As discussed on those pages, far more students from Ms. Kramer's class volunteered than I had time to work with, a situation which did not recur in any other class described in this study. However, because of the limited time frame within which the students were completing their research papers, my selection of students from among those who volunteered was determined largely by which students were the first to be at home when I called to set up interviews. Nevertheless, Ms. Kramer described the six students in the sample as an accurate cross-section of the class.

Data Collection

Because of a schedule conflict, I was not able to attend every class session. I did, however, attend three sessions (the equivalent of five or six fifty-minute classes, since class sessions during the abbreviated semester lasted almost two hours) and took notes.

I interviewed each student twice and Ms. Kramer twice, with the first set of interviews taking place before first drafts had been written and the second set of interviews taking place after the papers had been completed, graded, and returned to the students. I also interviewed one student a third time, after he had turned in his paper but before he had gotten it back. Eleven of the fifteen interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, while the other four were
reconstructed from notes.

I followed three students on different occasions as they sought sources in the college's library and as they read and took notes from those sources. During these sessions, each student briefly told me his or her thoughts and research plans as he or she worked.

All six students provided photocopies of the final copies of their research papers, with Ms. Kramer's grades and written comments included, as well as provided all previous drafts of their papers and all of their reading notes used in completing the assignment. Four also provided outlines, three provided working bibliographies or bibliography cards, and one provided an in-class writing exercise he had completed on his topic, in which he had performed forms of freewriting known as "looping" and "cubing."

The Students

Basic information about the students may be found in Table 5 on page 311. Cora is an African-American, while the other five students are Caucasians, as is Ms. Kramer.

Cora, nearing graduation from the University after eleven years as a part-time student, said that she had already passed second-semester composition years before, but that she was retaking the course in order to eliminate the relatively low grade she had earned previously from her GPA. She lacked confidence in herself as a writer and repeatedly stated that after taking this course, she did not intend to deal with the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Father's Education</th>
<th>Mother's Education</th>
<th>Hours/wk employed</th>
<th>Taking another class?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>about 15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>50-75</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>over 40</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arthur Miller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salem Witch Trials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velma</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carlos Romulo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Given that these classes took less than five weeks, the three-credit composition class by itself was the workload equivalent of taking nine hours' worth of classes during the regular semester. By taking a second three-credit class, the students were giving themselves a load approximately equal to taking 18 hours of classes during a regular semester.*
English Department again.

Junior, despite taking the course while working extremely long hours at his job, remained cheerful and enthusiastic in class and during interviews throughout the study. An ambitious man with a lower-level management job, he saw education as a vehicle for rising within the company where he was employed. Almost a Horatio Alger type, he combined the politeness of an adult who regularly says "Sir" and "Ma'am" with the aggressiveness of a self-styled rising young executive.

Scott already had a bachelor’s degree in electronics from another university. Discontented with his career in electronics, he had returned to school to gain certification to teach high school biology. He took pride in his writing ability: he had been a Writing Center tutor at his previous university, and he wrote fiction, some of which he had begun to submit to magazines. Students volunteering to participate in the study were asked to fill out their names, telephone numbers, and any information about their experiences with research papers. Scott had written "No problems with papers." This phrase typified his view of himself as a writer: he perceived himself not only as producing good writing, but as producing it without great difficulty.

Steve, raised in England by his working-class British mother and stepfather, had only recently arrived in America. He was now living with his American father, whom he had
scarcey known until the past few months. Although by nature cheerful and friendly, he was going through a difficult period in his life: the American education system seemed strange to him, he was homesick and called his girlfriend in London weekly, and he found life with his unstable, alcoholic father extremely trying.

Tommy, the son of financially comfortable parents, was the only person in the 24-student sample who acknowledged having been less than honest in his past research papers. He stated that when required to do a research paper in a high school to which he had just transferred, he had handed in a paper he had written for a class at his previous school, without telling his new teacher that he was doing so. He also said, "In the high school paper I did research and everything, but if you had checked the references--well, if I needed a certain piece of information, I just made it up and put it in there."

Velma, a registered nurse returning to school to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing, was like Steve in that she seemed somewhat disoriented by America. Although born and raised in the town where this study took place, she had returned to America only within the past year after spending the previous 17 years abroad as a missionary, mostly in the Philippines. She seemed somewhat intimidated by the younger students, for whom, she was convinced, learning came easier. However, she also noticed that she and most other older
students seemed more willing to work hard at classes than were most of the younger students.

As the preceding descriptions demonstrate, some of the students would have to overcome considerable obstacles—tuning out personal conflicts or memories of doing badly in the same course previously—to do well in the class. Also, as Table 5 demonstrates, the students did not generally come from the types of family backgrounds which would lead them to assume that they would attend and graduate from college. Nor were they the offspring of the upper middle class, as one might expect of "traditional" college students; rather, their parents' jobs reflected widely varied backgrounds: farmer, carpenter/mechanic, pilot, waitress, engineer, homemaker, nurse's aide, disabled former baker. In Bakhtinian terms, the students' family backgrounds did not necessarily provide the students with inner voices assuring them that they could succeed.

Moreover, largely because they did not come from privileged backgrounds, most of the students combined classes with jobs, with four of the six working full-time or almost full-time. In this respect, they typified their class: Ms. Kramer stated that all but three of the 26 students in the class had jobs, mostly full-time or almost full-time. In addition, of the six students in the sample, all but Junior were taking one other three-credit class during the month-long semester—roughly equivalent to an 18-hour load during a
regular semester. Thus, the students had not arranged their schedules in such a way as to maximize their chances for success in writing research papers against strict deadlines.

Junior avoided taking other classes for good reason. A warehouse supervisor for a supermarket chain, he normally worked about 50 hours per week. However, because his company was opening three new outlets and gearing up for Memorial Day, Junior reported averaging 75 hours per week on the job during his last three weeks in the course, during which time his research paper discussed in this chapter was due. He reported working 16 hours at his job both on the day before the second research paper was due and on the due date itself. Furthermore, on the weekend before the paper was due, he and his wife closed on a house and moved all of their belongings into that house.

Although Junior’s story borders on the unbelievable, everything about it that could be checked—his job, his company’s opening three new outlets, the recent change of address—turned out to be accurate. "I’ve found that I’m able to get by with about four or five hours of sleep a night, no problem," he told me. During this three-week period he slept even less, sometimes going to bed after work at 2:30 A.M. and getting up for class at 5:00 A.M. or else going to bed after class at 10:00 A.M. and getting up for work at 1:00 P.M. "It’ll be worth it in the long run," he said.

But while the students’ personal situations, family
backgrounds or time schedules sometimes seemed to work against them, on the whole the previous experiences of these students, unlike those of most of the community college students described in the previous two chapters, seemed to predict success. First, all recalled messages steering them toward education as they were growing up, even those with nontraditional backgrounds. Although Cora’s single-parent mother had not finished high school, Cora recalled that after she returned home late at night from her second-shift job, she would check Cora’s homework. Junior said of his parents, "They pushed us to learn as much as we possibly could." Although his parents had attended school only through eighth grade, all four of his siblings had earned bachelor’s degrees.

Although Velma said little about the attitudes of her parents, neither of whom had been educated beyond the sixth grade, toward education, she described her current family as strongly supportive of her education. Although she was the only one of the six students described in this chapter who did not work outside the home, she described her husband and her college-student daughter not only as having taken over the housework and the cooking so that she could study, but also as having typed and proofread her papers. "It’s kind of like a family project, my going to school," she said.

Among those students whose parents had a more formal education, it was less a matter of parental encouragement to get an education than an atmosphere of implicit expectations.
Tommy, both of whose parents had bachelor’s degrees, replied when asked why he had chosen to go to college, "It just seemed natural, the thing that people do at this point in their lives." (This contrasts the words of Ann, a Basic Writer described in Chapter Four: "I always thought only rich people went to college.")

Sometimes parental encouragement toward education even warred with the students’ desires. Scott stated that he had originally majored in electronics mainly because his father, an engineer, had said, "It’s the wave of the future. Big bucks. Go for it." As already mentioned, Scott had since decided to change fields. Steve, in turn, regretted accepting his father’s advice to come live with him in America while attending college. Thus, in contrast with the community college students, most of whom reported little or no parental encouragement toward education, some of the University students reported perhaps too much encouragement. In Bakhtinian terms, the voices encouraging them to succeed in school were a bit too loud.

Besides generally being encouraged toward education, the students recalled being specifically encouraged toward reading. "Dad was big on reading," Scott said. "He started teaching me to read when I was three or four." Tommy said, "Dad always wanted me to do a lot of reading, even though I hated it." Cora recalled that her mother always ordered Weekly Reader books for her to read in the summer. Velma
remembered a fifth-grade teacher who "made it click for me with reading."

In general, the University students had an enthusiasm for and experience with reading not encountered in most of the community college students. "I’m an insatiable reader," Scott said. "I read everything--billboards on the interstate, anything." Steve described with amused condescension a theatre class he was taking in which he was to read Hamlet and Oedipus Rex, works he had already read and analyzed in detail in British schools during his mid-teens. Even Tommy, who still disliked most reading, particularly fiction, stated that he enjoyed reading National Geographic and The Smithsonian, magazines which would have held little appeal for most of the community college students described in Chapters Five and Six.

Most of the students also differed from most of the community college students in that they had a history of success on research-paper assignments. All six had already completed at least one research paper in college; four of the six also reported having completed at least two research papers in high school, and all four reported receiving A’s or B’s on those papers.

Thus, the research-paper assignment created no fear for most of the students. "Research papers aren’t a problem if you have things organized," said Scott, who has already been described as unusually confident about his writing ability. Steve said, "All this paraphrasing and summarizing, it’s
nothing difficult. In England, they stop having you do things like that when you’re sixteen or seventeen." The one exception was Velma, who worried not only about the research-paper assignment, but also about her classes in general.

Finally, the students' grade-point-averages and college experience at the time of the course lead one to expect success. As shown in Table 5, the students' college GPA's ranged from 2.7 to 3.5, meaning all were at least B-minus students. The three whose averages were slightly below 3.0 were all seniors, far more academically experienced than most students in a 100-level class; in fact, Scott, although listed as a senior, had a bachelor's degree, as already mentioned. The three who were first-year college students all had at least a 3.0. Thus, many factors—parental attitudes toward education, attitudes toward reading, experience and success with academics in general and research papers in particular—supported these students' textual voices, seeming to predict success for these students.

Teacher and Teaching Methods

Ms. Kramer taught composition only part-time while working full-time at a job unrelated to writing. Moreover, she held only a bachelor's degree, the same degree held by Scott, one of the students in the sample. Nevertheless, Ms. Kramer was a highly respected teacher. Besides being recommended by the Director of Composition as an exemplary non-traditional teacher, she was the only part-time teacher
ever to have been nominated as a finalist for the University Student Government Association's Teacher of the Year award.

Ms. Kramer's wordings during interviews clearly revealed her pedagogical preferences. Echoing Ken Macrorie, she called the students' papers "search papers" rather than "research papers." Thus, as might be expected, she tended to emphasize writing, including research-paper writing, as a vehicle of self-expression. While Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan in Chapter Five prepared their students for the research-paper assignment partly through warnings about plagiarism and exercises requiring them to paraphrase, summarize, and cite certain articles, Ms. Kramer, in addition to going over a handout about plagiarism and having the students perform exercises involving paraphrase, summary, and citation, required the students to perform a number of exercises stressing the interplay between a text and the students' ideas. For example, on one occasion Ms. Kramer gave the students an article on a controversial subject and asked them to write a personal reaction, while on another occasion she gave the students a collection of short articles and cartoons on a given subject and asked them to write a reaction and synthesis.

Besides echoing Macrorie, Ms. Kramer also echoed Donald Murray at times, for example, in referring to the students' first drafts as their "zero drafts." Not surprisingly, then, she greatly stressed the idea of writing as emerging from a
complex, highly challenging, process. Ms. Kramer instructed the students to turn in, along with the final copies of their papers, "every scrap" of writing they had completed in connection with the paper, as well as photocopies of cited pages. She also made it clear to the students that she expected those scraps of paper to show signs of full engagement with the writing process. During her first interview, she said, in words which clearly demonstrate the extent to which Murray had influenced her thought:

Their zero drafts are due tomorrow. I call them "zero drafts" instead of first drafts because my attitude is, now that they've got something on paper, they can begin to get going and figure out what they're trying to say. I told them I wanted to see zero drafts with signs of wear and tear--tear stains, spilled coffee, and Coke on them.

Similarly, when asked about the students' papers during her second interview, she discussed at great length the students' processes of completing the papers but said very little about the completed papers themselves.

Like Macrorie and Murray, Ms. Kramer seems to be extremely concerned about her students as individuals. When more students volunteered to participate in the study than I could handle and I asked Ms. Kramer for advice about which ones to choose, she had no difficulty summarizing the writing style and personality of each of the eighteen people who had volunteered--a remarkable feat, considering that the class contained twenty-six students and had only met five times at that point. She also stated that she attempted to establish
a student-centered atmosphere in class, saying, "I feel like
I'm a facilitator more than I am a teacher. I do have an
agenda, but I don't think the students can tell it. I like
them to feel that their pace is the pace we're using." Given
the frenetic demands of the abbreviated semester, it must have
been challenging indeed to allow the students to feel that
they were establishing the pace of the course.

Ms. Kramer's use of class time reflected her interest in
the students as individuals, her emphasis on the writing
process, and her belief that research papers can be vehicles
of self-expression. After giving the students the freedom to
write their first research papers about anything they wanted,
Ms. Kramer devoted the first two class sessions to having each
student discuss his or her academic major, hobbies, and
general background, partly to promote common interests and
create a sense of (discourse) community, but primarily to help
the students discover areas they would like to explore further
through research. "Find something you want to know more
about," she said to the class. "You'll be spending twenty,
thirty, forty, fifty hours on this topic. Don't let it be
drudgery." When a few students had not found topics as
quickly as most of the others, Ms. Kramer dismissed most of
the students early and took the undecided students to the
University library to browse among the current issues of the
library's periodicals, so that they would encounter other
topics which might grab their interest.
Once the students had chosen topics, Ms. Kramer asked each student to tell the class how he or she intended to research the topic. After each student spoke, other students, as well as Ms. Kramer, suggested other sources or strategies that the student had not mentioned. In addition, each student was required to keep a research log, recording his or her feelings, strategies, and progress (or lack of it). Each day, Ms. Kramer collected the research logs of a different group from within the class, responding to them both in writing and in class discussions as a way of focusing class time on the students’ work. Thus, the students themselves and their writing processes were emphatically the focus of most class time.

Ms. Kramer tried to encourage students to view the research-paper assignment as an exciting task, one well worth the hard work it requires. In a characteristic statement during her second interview, she said:

All students love to write, once they get into it. I haven’t found too many that still have that stilted pen by the end of the semester. And they need that library. I love research, the method of research, making sure the students acquire the powers of research. And I feel that you can make something that is seemingly very boring into something very interesting. One of my big things is that they are gonna enjoy this class. The very first day, I tell them, "You’re gonna work yourself to death, but you’re gonna enjoy it." And they look at me like, "Sure, lady. Just try to make me." But that’s part of the thrill, getting them to.

Whether because of Ms. Kramer’s personality and methods, a fortuitous combination of students, or other factors, Ms.
Kramer's class seemed somewhat more animated than others observed in this study, even when class activities were relatively traditional. For instance, during a class discussion springing from ideas in an essay the class had read, one student said, "Well, I wouldn't let my wife--"

"You wouldn't let your wife?!" shouted a female student across the room. Although the dispute subsided a minute or so later without anyone telling anyone else to step outside, the discussion atmosphere continued at a free-wheeling level unusual for college classes.

While most of the teachers in the sample were praised much more than criticized by their students in the sample, Ms. Kramer was by far the most highly praised of any of the six classroom teachers. (The two heads of thesis committees, discussed in Chapter Eight, perhaps belong in a different category when such comparisons are made.) Steve contrasted British university professors, whom he described as "very pompous," with Ms. Kramer, saying,

Ms. Kramer is very easy to get on with. I thought at first that everybody [in the class] knew each other and I was the only stranger. They didn't know each other, but with these classroom discussions, everybody sort of comes out of themselves. If somebody feels strongly about something, no matter how shy they are, they'll probably speak. I mean, I was new, but when we got on a topic that I'm interested in, then I said something. And that's good.

In strikingly different terms, others echoed Steve's idea that Ms. Kramer could put them at ease. During his first interview, Tommy expressed confidence that he would do well in
the class, explaining, "I like the teacher, and I really feel that I get along with her. And if you're in good karma with the teacher, she's going to like your writing." Even Cora, who repeatedly expressed her eagerness to complete the class so that she would never again have to deal with the English Department, said, "My boyfriend say, 'You never have anything negative to say about this class. You're always tops about it.' And it's true--I love it! She's a good teacher." (As discussed in Chapter Three, quotations throughout the study are presented as originally spoken or written, largely without use of [sic].)

Thus, the classroom environment, along with other elements already discussed earlier in this chapter, seemed to maximize the students’ chances of success on the research-paper assignment. If Ms. Kramer’s voice would influence the students’ textual voices, it would presumably do so by serving to remind the students that research-paper assignments could be meaningful experiences and that they were completing this assignment for a class that they enjoyed, taught by a teacher that they liked.

The Assignment

Because of the abbreviated semester, Ms. Kramer had received permission from the Director of Composition to modify the course requirements somewhat. Instead of writing three research papers during the course, the students would write two research papers and, at the end of the semester, would
present an oral report based on research. Nevertheless, the
students faced imposing deadline pressures: thirteen days
after the first day of class, the first research paper was
due, and nine days after the due date for the first paper, the
second research paper was due. Of the six students in the
sample, Tommy is described completing the first research
paper, while the remaining students are described completing
the second.

As already mentioned, the students were allowed to write
the first paper on any topic which interested them. The
second paper was to deal with five years in the life of any
well-known person. Ms. Kramer stated that the five-year
restriction was intended to encourage students to develop a
thesis and to use original analysis rather than simply writing
encyclopedia-like reports. She also discouraged the students
from writing about the best-known years in the person's life,
suggesting that they instead search for seeds of future
greatness in a notable person's childhood, examine the
agonizing struggle in the years preceding the breakthrough of
a seeming "overnight sensation," study how a famous person
handled the anticlimax of retirement from public life, or find
some other unusual angle. Thus, although Ms. Kramer did not
require the students to conduct original research, she did
require that, in Bakhtinian terms, the students' intentions
should dominate the texts, with the voices represented by the
students' sources used to serve the students' intentions.
The Research-Paper Processes

Topic Selection

Tommy, the one student who will be described completing the first research-paper assignment, benefited from Ms. Kramer’s decision to focus class time on the students’ topic-selection processes. Because of the abbreviated semester, students were asked to name their topics by the third class session. Not having decided on a topic by that day, Tommy named one arbitrarily, simply because he had to say something. Later in the class period, however, he became interested in the class’s discussion of another student’s topic, demonology. As a result, Tommy eventually chose to write about the Salem witch trials. Tommy said of his classmates, "They helped me out just by my being able to listen to them."

Although topic selection guidelines were slightly more restrictive for the second paper than for the first, the students in the sample reported no difficulty finding topics that interested them. They chose topics based on reading more often than did the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four, a natural consequence of both the topic requirement (writing about a well-known person) and the fact that they were more experienced and enthusiastic readers than were the Basic Writers. For example, Scott had developed an interest in Theodore Roosevelt, his eventual subject, during a previous history class, and Junior chose to write about John F. Kennedy because while searching for material on a different topic, he
accidentally ran across an article about JFK that he had read the year before, an article that had moved him. Nevertheless, in keeping with Ms. Kramer’s emphasis on the research-paper as self-expression, some of the students chose topics because of their personal experiences. Velma chose to write about Philippine hero Carlos Romulo because of her 13 years as a missionary in the Philippines, and Steve, homesick for England, sought to write about Marilyn Monroe largely because his girlfriend in London idolized her. Cora’s selection of Martin Luther King reflected a convergence of personal experience and reading. An African-American, she talked enthusiastically of King’s tie-ins with her own life: the long struggle to get a street in her hometown named after King, her discovery that as a young man King had unsuccessfully applied for a ministerial position in her hometown, her memories of crying along with her second-grade classmates on the day King was assassinated. But her boyfriend had also been reading the first volume of a King biography, and her interest in King had been piqued by looking at sections of the book and discussing it with her boyfriend.

Some of these topics, notably Kennedy and King, might strike some English teachers as tired warhorses. The students who selected them, however, liked their topics and, after the paper was completed, talked enthusiastically about what they had learned about their subjects. In topic selection as in wordings, one person’s (often a teacher’s) cliche is another
person's (often a student's) exciting new discovery.

Despite having only nine days to complete the paper, most of the students reported having considered other topics before settling on one. Scott had already decided to write about Theodore Roosevelt when I interviewed him only hours after the class period in which the assignment was given, but he told me that during the class itself he had done what millions of other Americans have done: he had considered, and then had rejected, Richard Nixon.

While Scott simply found Roosevelt more interesting than Nixon, others rejected various alternatives as incompatible with the assignment, the short semester, or library resources. Velma had considered writing about Anne Frank because she had recently visited Frank's home, but chose not to in part because almost all available information about Frank centers on her last three years, while the assignment was to deal with roughly five years in the person's life. Cora had wanted to write about a friend with severe drug problems, substituting sources about substance abuse for sources about a famous person, and had received permission from Ms. Kramer to do so. However, she felt that she could not write a good paper on this subject without interviewing her friend, and she believed that the nine-day time frame left her insufficient time to conduct and analyze an interview adequately. "If it was a regular semester, I'd have done it," she said.
Carol Kuhlthau’s claim that students need to be able to adjust their intended focus for the paper to suit available material (221), already discussed in Chapter Five, was strongly supported by Steve’s topic-selection process. Steve had planned to write about Marilyn Monroe, focusing on the years immediately preceding and including her marriage to Arthur Miller. However, all of the University library’s books about Monroe were checked out, and Steve was unable to get a public library card because a recent move had left him with no identification at his current address. Meanwhile, for his theatre class, Steve had read, and discovered he liked, *Death of a Salesman*. So he switched to writing his paper about Arthur Miller, focusing on the years immediately preceding and including Miller’s marriage to Marilyn Monroe.

Finally, Junior demonstrated the surprising turns a student’s topic-selection process can take. A staunch Republican, Junior initially planned to write about Ronald Reagan, John Wayne, George Bush, or any influential businessman who had worked his way up from the bottom. But moved by the article about John F. Kennedy he had happened across, and encouraged by the wealth of information available on Kennedy, he ended up writing a warm tribute to JFK.

**Task Representation**

Because certain elements of the students’ task representations become clear only when the papers themselves are examined, those elements will not be discussed until later
in the chapter, when the completed papers are discussed. The elements discussed here are those which were apparent from interviews before the students began writing the papers.

Like the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four, the students discussed in this chapter generally viewed the research-paper assignment in positive terms because they considered it an opportunity to learn more about something that they were interested in. Given the already-discussed contrasts between the Basic Writers and the University's First-Year Composition students, this similarity at first may seem surprising. The key to the similarity, however, probably lies not in the students, but in the assignments: in both cases, the teachers granted the students considerable freedom regarding the topics they selected, and in both cases the teachers encouraged the students to select topics about which they cared deeply. Thus Scott, who described himself as having been "apathetic" to research-paper assignments in previous classes, said,

But I like this, having a choice, because it gives me a legitimate chance to go back and learn something I had wanted to learn but never found the time for before. I've always thought Teddy Roosevelt was a fascinating president. I'd like to see what made him tick, and this gives me an excuse to find out. When she said at the start of the semester that she wanted us to write about things we were interested in, that gave me a positive outlook right away. It's much better than hearing, "Well, I'll give you a list of subjects to choose from." Granted, you can choose from the list, but that's a pretty limited choice. In that case, you get the idea that if you don't write exactly what the instructor wants you to write, you're not gonna get the credit. I don't think it's really teaching when
you tell someone what to write and how to write it. Scott’s statement contains echoes of issues discussed in Chapter Five: the students’ unhappiness with the lists of topics from which they were required to choose and their teachers’ assumptions that there was one “obvious” way to approach certain topics. However, it is worth noting that while Scott is praising Ms. Kramer for giving students freedom in topic selection, he goes further: he not only demands that the teacher grant him freedom regarding what to write, but also freedom regarding how to write it. Given Ms. Kramer’s determination that students should produce texts in a certain way—through much writing and many drafts, drafts covered with crossouts, Coke stains, and tears—and given Scott’s self-image as one who produces good writing without much difficulty, Scott’s insistence on freedom to write in his own way foreshadows a potential conflict.

Like Scott, most of the other students in the sample seemed pleased with the opportunity to learn about topics which interested them. Although busy trying to balance work, classes, and a serious dating relationship, Cora willingly lengthened her interviews through her eagerness to describe what she had learned and to tell me little-known facts about Martin Luther King. (Scott did much the same thing, discussing Teddy Roosevelt, during his interviews.) Tommy recalled photocopying an article on his subject, although he knew that he could not use the article’s information in his
paper, simply because he found the article interesting and he wanted a copy of it.

Even after completing their papers and receiving their grades on the assignment, the students continued to emphasize their interest in learning about their topics. Junior, who described his research as changing his view of Kennedy, said of completing the assignment, "I found it very interesting, and I learned a lot." Cora and Steve both expressed regret that the abbreviated semester had severely limited the amount of time they had been able to spend on the paper; however, they regretted this not because they had received low grades on their papers--they had not--but because the time factor had limited how much they had learned. "I don’t feel I’ve learned as much as I could have," Cora said. "I could get more out of the research if I had time."

Another regret Cora expressed also emphasizes that when students have the freedom to choose research-paper topics within their own fields of interest, the opportunity to learn about those topics can be a powerful motivator. After she had completed the paper about King, Cora expressed regret that she had not written about Malcolm X instead. The reason for this regret, she said, was that she had already known quite a bit about King prior to writing the paper, but knew virtually nothing about Malcolm X.
Audience and Criteria for Grading

Ms. Kramer did not specify an audience for the papers, nor did she ask the students to specify one. Although she evidently sought to establish the class as a discourse community and although she devoted class time to having students read and respond to each other’s work-in-progress, the abbreviated semester had discouraged her from scheduling days for students to peer edit each other’s completed rough drafts; time was simply too short for her to require students to complete a draft even one class period in advance. Thus, there was little to encourage the students to regard their classmates as their audience.

The only one of the six students to mention an audience beyond teacher-as-examiner for her paper was Cora, who said that she envisioned a reader like her fifteen-year-old niece. "When we have Martin Luther King day, a lot of people, especially kids like her, just look at it as a day off or a day out of school," she said. "I’d like somebody like her to know what kind of a person King was."

The students were, of course, aware of Ms. Kramer as audience, particularly in her capacity as grader. Significantly, when they discussed the criteria by which their work would be evaluated, the students said very little about the qualities of the finished essay; rather, they discussed the need to turn in large quantities of other material besides the final copy in order to please Ms. Kramer. Cora, for
example, said,

The first paper, I hand it in and she tell me, "This one looks so neat." And then this other girl had gobs and gobs of paper, and she held up her note cards and this and that, and she said, "This is what I call a research paper!" And I thought, "Gol, mind don't look like that."

Cora's problem with Ms. Kramer's preference for physical evidence of an elaborate writing process was that Cora preferred to compose her first draft on a word processor and to revise from the screen, not from printed copy. Thus, she ordinarily produced no physical evidence of having revised her essays. Scott and Steve also stated that they ordinarily composed in this way. Thus, three of the six students would have to alter their traditional methods in order to provide the physical evidence of revision which Ms. Kramer valued.

Although many of her statements in class made her views about writing clear, Ms. Kramer had not provided the students with a written or spoken set of criteria by which she would evaluate their essays. She evidently did not simply ignore the finished paper in determining grades: three students in the sample reported losing A's on the first research paper because of problems with grammar, spelling, or citations. Nevertheless, the students seemed to assume that to Ms. Kramer, physical evidence of their writing processes was an important criterion for evaluating their papers. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the students' assumption was correct.
Gathering Information

Although two of the students reported searching in the public library as well as the University library, five of the six ended up relying exclusively on sources they found in the University library, while the sixth, Junior, relied on the University library for all of his sources except for one short article. No other group of students in the entire sample relied so exclusively on one library for sources. Given the fact that most of Ms. Kramer’s students had a history of success on research-paper assignments, this single-library approach probably reflected not lack of research initiative and sophistication, but rather deadline pressures caused by the abbreviated semester; also, because the University’s library housed the city’s most extensive collection, the students probably felt less need to look elsewhere than did the community college students after looking in the community college’s library.

After Cora abandoned the idea of interviewing her friend for a paper about drug abuse, none of the six apparently considered any other kinds of research besides library research paper. This, too, may be attributed partly to deadline pressure; Cora, after all, said that with more time, she might well have interviewed her friend and written about drug abuse. However, the requirement to write about a prominent person was probably a larger factor; other than perhaps interviews with history professors, the students were
left with few options for non-library research. In fact, for the assignment after this research paper, the speech based on research, Scott created and administered a survey regarding adolescents' knowledge of sex.

The students displayed widely differing levels of sophistication in their approaches to the library. Scott was probably the most sophisticated. Knowing that Ms. Kramer required an outline with this paper, he started by looking up his subject in the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Collier's Encyclopedia to gain the background information necessary to form a tentative mental outline. He then sought different types of books to fill different needs: fairly recent books by contemporary historians to provide a relatively detached, analytical perspective, and older books by Roosevelt's acquaintances and by Roosevelt himself to provide a personal touch and a sprinkling of openly biased, quaintly anachronistic quotations. Because he was sophisticated enough to recognize bias in a text, he could use biased texts as sources of color rather than absorbing the same bias into his own paper. Of a book called The Illustrious Career and Heroic Deeds of Colonel Roosevelt he said, "You could tell from the title that this guy loved Teddy Roosevelt. And then in the text he called Roosevelt 'an intellectual giant,' 'a man ahead of his time,' called his career 'marvelous,' and all these other great adjectives." Similarly, Scott relished the obvious bias in a book of old-time political cartoons ("It was
great. They always drew him carrying this big stick.") and the outspoken tone of Roosevelt’s biography ("You wouldn’t believe some of the things he said, like, ‘Trying to pin the Colombian government down to a deal was like trying to nail currant jelly to a wall.’"). Margaret Kantz has argued that one key to successful reading for research-paper assignments is to employ "rhetorical reading strategies"—that is, to read with an awareness of the rhetorical situation ("Helping"). Scott was aware of both the rhetorical situations of his sources—noticing their biases, recognizing the archaic elements in the styles of older works, and so forth—and his own rhetorical situation as one who was reading about Roosevelt to write about Roosevelt—seeking different types of information from different types of sources, recognizing the usefulness of colorful quotations, and so forth. In his approach to his sources, Scott resembled the honors students completing senior theses (discussed in Chapter Eight) and some of the better Advanced Composition students (discussed in Chapter Seven) more than he resembled most of the other First-Year Composition students in the sample. Of course, given that Scott had already earned a bachelor’s degree, it is not surprising that his approach resembled those found in more advanced students than those ordinarily found in First-Year Composition classes.

At the other end, Junior was probably the least sophisticated library researcher among the six students. He
at first went to the public library, avoiding the University library because he did not know how to use the computerized card catalogue. Later, after a University librarian taught him to use the computerized card catalogue and locate books about John F. Kennedy, the large number of books available helped convince him to write about Kennedy. Asked what criteria he used to select from among the many books, he replied, "I just took whatever was there"—the nonselective approach often associated with less advanced students.

The others demonstrated various levels of research sophistication somewhere between Scott's and Junior's. Velma, characteristically, said she was having trouble "learning the library" after being away from school for so long. Equally characteristically, however, she was willing to return to the library again and again and to ask the reference librarians question after question—a willingness she said that younger students often lacked. As a result of that willingness, she eventually learned to use reference tools such as Contemporary Authors and Biography and Genealogy Master Index to accumulate a bibliography on her subject, Carlos Romulo. Once she located books about Romulo, she demonstrated the intelligence and resourcefulness that lay beneath her insecure exterior: she looked for bibliographies in each book in hopes of finding further sources and she perused the books shelved in the immediate area, using indexes and tables of contents to see if these books contained further information about Romulo. Velma
was also the only one of Ms. Kramer’s students besides Scott to mention possible bias in certain sources.

Although Steve and Cora perhaps researched in a less clever and persistent manner than Velma, both displayed moderate library skills. Relying primarily on magazine articles, both used Reader’s Guide volumes corresponding to the years about which they intended to write: 1956-60 for Steve’s paper about Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe, 1963-68 for Cora’s paper about Martin Luther King. (Velma did the same, consulting the Reader’s Guide entries for the late 1930’s and early 1940’s in order to gain information about Romulo’s activities during World War II.) While the use of these older articles might seem an obvious strategy given the topics, many First-Year Composition students avoid older articles, and some avoid periodicals altogether. Studies have, in fact, demonstrated that many students avoid all library access tools except the card catalogue (Reed).

Given that he was writing about the Salem Witch Trials, which took place in 1691 and 1692, Tommy could not rely on old magazines for articles of "news" coverage of his topic. He did, however, display library skills, using such research tools as the Library of Congress Subject Headings and Newsbank.

These four "middle" students--less sophisticated than Scott, more sophisticated than Junior--also had specific goals, albeit fairly obvious ones, for each trip to the
library. When I observed Steve's library process, he was making his first trip to the library for this particular paper. His goals for that trip were simply to establish key dates—when Miller and Monroe married, when they divorced, and so forth—and to accumulate a list of articles, most of which he would not have time to look up until he returned the next day. Cora and Velma, on their second and third library trips, respectively, for this paper when I observed them, had already established key dates and had accumulated lists of sources during previous trips. Both now sought a focus to unify their papers and thus wanted information about the personalities of their subjects to complement their information about accomplishments. Tommy, in turn, reported yet another goal for a trip to the library very late in the process, just before he started his first draft of the paper: to find two more sources in order to reach the minimum of ten required by the assignment. "I photocopied a couple of articles and just looked for any information from them I could find," he said. "I was desperate at that point. One part in my paper probably doesn't make sense because I just stuck this one quote in there."

The "middle group" students also seemed to have plans that guided their approaches to their sources, although the plans were not as elaborate or sophisticated as Scott's. Cora hoped to establish an outline for her paper by reading articles first, so that she could then use indexes and read
only small sections of her books, rather than reading the books in their entirety. Velma, however, always willing to make the extra effort, read her books first to get an overview of Romulo's activities during World War II as a whole, then used a few articles to fill in details about specific events. Like Ralph in Chapter Five, Tommy sought to find a source which would provide him with both a succinct account of his topic and a structure for his paper. He eventually found one in an article from American Heritage. "I used information from other sources, too, but my paper is basically a condensed version of that article," he said. As discussed in Chapter Five, although this tactic of structuring one's paper around a single source has been described as characteristic of weaker students (Kantz, Composing 43-44), the three students in this study who described themselves as employing such a tactic were generally successful student writers, both in terms of grades on the research papers they completed for this study and in terms of their overall GPA's.

The middle group of students could also quickly evaluate a source's potential usefulness. Velma used a book's index to find the pages that mentioned Romulo, skimmed those pages, and returned the book to the shelf, stating that it contained no information she did not already have. Before switching his focus to Arthur Miller, Steve skimmed articles about Marilyn Monroe, looking for references to the Monroe-Miller marriage, and discarded the articles if he found no such references.
Cora skimmed articles and rejected them unless they dealt with King's major accomplishments or helped to portray King's character.

However, the middle group of students all displayed limitations in their search strategies, as well. Velma mentioned bias and Tommy stated that he considered recent sources to be better than older ones, but otherwise none of the students showed any awareness that some sources might be more reliable than others. In fact, faced with a list of articles mainly from popular magazines along with a sprinkling from scholarly journals, Cora consistently tracked down the popular magazines but not the scholarly journals. While she complained about the University library's failure to save back issues of *Ebony* and *Jet*, she avoided articles in the *Negro History Bulletin*.

In fact, while all of the students except Junior went beyond simply using the card catalogue, some avoided certain kinds of sources on the basis that those sources were too much trouble to use. Cora was willing to view a film from the library's collection and eventually cited it in her paper, but she would not read articles on microfilm. Tommy would not use books that did not contain an index.

When I observed Cora, Steve, and Velma working in the library, all encountered certain problems finding sources. Seeking magazine articles, Velma wrote down only the Library of Congress call numbers for certain magazines, not the
specific issue and page numbers on which the relevant articles could be found, while Steve copied only the name of the magazine, the volume number, and the pages, a system that would have worked for scholarly journals with continuous pagination, but not for the popular magazines he was dealing with. After climbing the stairs and locating the bound volumes of the periodicals they sought, both discovered that they lacked sufficient information to find the specific articles they wanted and thus had to return to the first floor for additional information. Cora failed to find one source because she thought the abbreviation SAT R meant Saturday Republican and almost failed to find another because she mistook a "’68" for volume 68, even though she was looking for articles from 1968.

The three students’ experiences also served as reminders that library research requires the student to survive a succession of small frustrations: making constant trips up and down stairs ("I’m not sure I’ve got the wind," Steve said), sometimes made worse by the knowledge that one could have avoided this particular trip by copying down more information from the Reader’s Guide in the first place; discovering that all the photocopy machines on one’s floor are out of order; finding that someone has ripped out the pages containing an article for which one had high hopes. And occasionally, the search involves minor triumphs such as opening a huge volume of a magazine’s back issues and
immediately finding the article one sought ("Man, I’m hitting them on the nose tonight!" Cora exulted), as well as unexpected entertainment. ("Just look at the hair styles from back then!" Cora said. "I always get off track in libraries.")

Tommy, in one case, encountered a triumph and a frustration almost simultaneously. After discovering, to his delight, the *American Heritage* article around which he would eventually structure his paper, he discovered, to his chagrin, that he had no change with him, and thus could not photocopy the article. He ended up copying almost the entire article, more or less verbatim, into his notes—a tactic which would create problems for him later.

While the community college’s library staff had the reputation of being almost too nurturing to the students, the University’s library staff was widely regarded as aloof. Ms. Kramer and her students gave the staff mixed reviews, at best. Ms. Kramer described the library orientation session as "useless," a rambling, monotone, 90-minute lecture. Velma, always willing to overcome obstacles to get necessary information, described the orientation as helpful, while the other students did not mention it. Steve said of the library staff, "I wish they’d be a bit more helpful about how the library works." Velma damned with faint praise, saying that although the librarians "don’t mind helping, as a rule," she had learned to persist even when the librarians seemed
unapproachable, telling herself, "Maybe it's a bad day for them." Only Junior seemed wholly pleased with the librarians. He said of the woman who taught him to use the computerized card catalogue, "She was super-nice. She didn't give me one of those eyeball rolls or anything like that. She just understood that I needed help."

Organizing Information: Focus Formulation

As has repeatedly been discussed in earlier chapters of this study, both Sandra Stotsky and Carol Kuhlthau have argued that ideally, students should formulate their focus for research papers during the search process, prior to beginning the first draft. Because they had so little time in which to research, write, and revise their papers, Ms. Kramer's students surely had less opportunity to formulate a focus prior to writing the first draft than did the students discussed in other chapters of this study. Of the six students, only two portrayed themselves during interviews as having formulated their focus prior to beginning the first draft. For one, Tommy, focus formulation was simply a by-product of choosing to structure the paper around the American Heritage article. In essence, Tommy let the article provide his paper with its focus—a reductive approach to task representation because, in Bakhtinian terms, Tommy had allowed the voice of one of his sources to dominate the paper, rather than controlling the voices of his sources by making those sources support a central point of his own making. However,
Tommy did write subtopics in the margins beside his notes, both from the *American Heritage* article and from other sources, indicating how he expected to use these notes in his paper. Thus, it appears that Tommy’s organizational skills did play at least some part in his paper’s focus and structure.

Scott, the other student to describe himself as having formulated a focus prior to beginning the rough draft, had established a tentative focus even before beginning to locate sources. Interviewed only hours after the paper had been assigned, he again stressed the ease of the writing process for him, saying,

> Once I get my subject in mind, the organization just falls into place. Like with this paper on Roosevelt, I’m gonna concentrate on his formative years first, to see why he would approach everything the way he did and do what he did, starting with the state parks system and the Panama Canal, things like that. Then I’ll focus on the years when he was working on the Canal, and that should easily cover the five-year period.

It was during this same interview that Scott described the research-paper assignment as an opportunity to find out "what made [Roosevelt] tick," a phrase which correlates with his interest in Roosevelt’s "formative years" as a clue to "why he would approach everything the way he did and do what he did." Thus, even before he had located a single source, Scott evidently envisioned both a structure and a focus for his paper.
As Jennie Nelson and John Hayes have pointed out, relatively advanced students tend to approach the library with specific goals for certain types of information, while less sophisticated researchers often simply ransack the library for anything on their general topic (10). Thus, Scott's early focus formulation and his resulting sense of goals during his library visits fit with his already-discussed research sophistication, just as Junior's "I just took whatever was there" fits with his overall lack of research sophistication and the middle group's rather generalized goals fit their moderate research sophistication. At the same time, as Kuhlthau has noted, if a focus is formulated too soon and is held too inflexibly despite difficulties in locating appropriate information during the search process, difficulties may result (219-221). Given, however, that the University's card catalogue listed 66 entries under "Roosevelt, Theodore," and given Scott's plan to deal with rather prominent elements of Roosevelt's life, the danger of his being unable to locate appropriate information seemed minimal.

Cora was the only other one of the six students to allude to the need for a focus during the interviews which took place prior to the time the students began writing their first drafts. She stated that she was pleased that Ms. Kramer had required class members to turn in an outline along with the paper, because she saw herself as prone to getting sidetracked
on extraneous material during research and when writing, and she believed that outlining would help her to combat this problem. "It'll help me get rid of the garbage," she said. Other than Scott's reference to looking in encyclopedias in order to establish a "mental outline," none of the others mentioned the outline.

Organizing Information: Taking Notes

During class, Ms. Kramer had taught the students a detailed method of notetaking, a method which involved reading the entire article first; rereading and underlining while looking for the article's thesis and structure; writing a summary of the article; editing the summary; checking the summary against the original for accuracy; and documenting. However, none of the students said that they used this method during their research, and most clearly did not use the method.

Most of the students did take notes on their reading in some form, generally in notebooks rather than on note cards. Some, in fact, combined various methods of notetaking. Velma started out using note cards but quickly switched to using her notebook for her notes, which consisted mainly of terse paraphrases and statements of fact rather than quotations. Cora combined notebook and note card paraphrases—again, mostly brief and factual—with highlighting of key passages in photocopied articles.
Scott, who stated that he ordinarily used notes only as reminders of what he had read, not as sources from which to write, produced a single page of notes, but with no citations tracing the notes to any particular source. Interviewed after turning in the essay, he stated that as was his custom, rather than writing from his notes, he had used bookmarks to mark the pages he had planned to use, had arranged his books in the order in which he had planned to use them, and had consulted the books as he wrote his paper. In contrast to Scott’s search strategies, this strategy of composing with the books in front of him rather than relying on notes has already been described in this study as characteristic of weaker writers (Kennedy 443). It is, however, consistent with Scott’s portrayal of himself as being capable of producing good writing without excessive effort.

Junior’s notetaking and composing methods were similar to Scott’s in this regard. Although Junior said during his first interview that he planned to follow Ms. Kramer’s notetaking advice "to the letter," adding, "I want an A," the notes he actually took simply named page numbers and paragraph numbers from his sources. Junior stated that he used these notes as reminders to turn to the correct pages and paragraphs from his sources while he was composing the paper.

As already mentioned, Tommy copied most of the American Heritage article almost verbatim into his notebook. Unfortunately, he used no quotation marks to differentiate
between word-for-word copying and paraphrase or summary. Tommy also took detailed notes, without quotation marks, on his other sources. As already mentioned, he also wrote subtopics for each note in the margin.

At the beginning of the course, Steve was totally unfamiliar with the research-paper assignment as it exists in American schools. "When Ms. Kramer started talking about note cards," he said, "I thought it was something like postcards to send to me Mum." Eventually, he took the most unconventional approach to notetaking of any of the six students. While reading in the library, he wrote temporary notes in his notebook, then as soon as possible transferred these notes into his word processor. Because his research paper was to cover five years in Arthur Miller’s life, he set up a separate entry in his menu for each year. During interviews, he argued that because of the word processor’s potential for storing and recategorizing information, the note-card system was outdated. However, Steve’s notetaking practices turned out to be far from ideal, as will become clear later in this chapter.

Rough Drafts

Three of the six students discussed the amount of time they spent composing the first draft. Despite the intense deadline pressures resulting from the abbreviated semester, two of the three took more than one day to compose their first drafts. With the final copy due on a Wednesday, Cora began writing her first draft on a Saturday, added more material on
Sunday, still more on Monday, and completed the first draft during a session which began late Tuesday night and, after delays caused by computer problems, ended early Wednesday morning. Velma stated that she began writing her first draft on Sunday evening, then returned to work on the draft Monday afternoon and completed it.

Tommy, the one student whose processes of completing the class’s first research paper are described in this chapter, was the only one to state that he completed his first draft during a single composing session. The first research paper was due on a Monday, but because Ms. Kramer had said that she would grade and return quickly any papers she received prior to the due date, Tommy hoped to complete his paper by the preceding Friday. In order to do so, he composed more or less steadily from nine o’clock Thursday evening through three o’clock Friday morning, at which time he had completed his rough draft.

The three students who discussed their time frames for completing the rough draft also discussed their preferred environments for composing the rough draft. All three preferred to be at home when they wrote. Cora and Velma preferred quiet surroundings, while Tommy preferred to have the radio playing music from a light-rock station. In fact, Tommy reported that even though he wanted to hand in the paper the next day, he delayed starting to write his first draft until his roommate, who had an exam the next day and who
preferred the apartment to be quiet when he studied, left the apartment. Tommy’s strategy was to talk to his roommate until the roommate, in frustration, left the apartment and went to the library. Then Tommy turned on the radio and began writing.

Three of the six students wrote their first drafts in ink, two wrote their first drafts on the word processor, and one, Cora, wrote in ink during her composing sessions on Saturday and Sunday, producing a draft of what would become only the first page of her final copy, and then on Monday switched to the word processor for the remainder of the project.

Responses to Rough Drafts

As previously mentioned, the truncated semester caused Ms. Kramer to abandon her usual practice of setting aside a class period for students to read each other’s completed rough drafts. Deadline pressure may also have made it difficult for the students to show their rough drafts to peers outside of class, since the students probably had more difficulty completing drafts far enough before the due date to have time to show those drafts to others.

Two of the students, however, did mention seeking intimate acquaintances’ responses to their drafts. Velma stated that her college-student daughter not only typed the final draft of the paper for her but also proofread it. She added, however, that her daughter gave no advice beyond
proofreading changes.

Cora apparently received more substantial help from the person to whom she showed her draft—the man she was dating, a professor in the social sciences at the community college discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this study. She described their discussions of her rough drafts as somewhat turbulent, but helpful:

I want to have the draft done in time to show it to a friend of mine. He’s good at helping, although I’ll argue with him. I mean, he’ll say, "Change this," and if I ask why, he’ll go, "Hey, you don’t have to ask for my help." I want his help, but I just want to know why he wants me to change something. Is it "Change this because I don’t like it" or "Change this because it’s wrong"? If it’s just that he don’t like it, I don’t always have to agree. But he’s a big help, so I want to get it to him in time to make changes.

Ms. Kramer, who always sought to know her students and especially to know about their writing processes, described Cora’s friend and his contribution much more favorably:

He did a wonderful job with her. He encouraged her. In her research log she would tell me how she’d get discouraged and think that she wasn’t focusing, and he would assure her that she was. She would come in and just be ecstatic because he had spent a lot of time helping her the evening before. My influence on her was really negligible because he did such a nice job with her.

In a Bakhtinian sense, Cora’s friend was evidently a major "voice" in her work.

Revision

With revision as with all elements of the research-paper assignment, Ms. Kramer’s students had to accommodate their strategies with the deadline pressures resulting from the
abbreviated semester. Most, however, reported little difficulty meeting the deadline. Interviewed after turning in the paper, Scott said, characteristically, that he had met the deadline "easily"—although he changed his account when interviewed after the paper had been returned. Velma stated that after completing her rough draft on Monday, she had revised it on Tuesday afternoon, then had made further changes on Tuesday evening as her daughter typed the final version, and still had completed the paper by her normal bedtime on Tuesday. Steve stated that he completed his final draft late Tuesday evening, "but not at three in the morning or anything."

Junior’s deadline pressures were even more severe than those of the other students. Because he faced sixteen-hour days at his job on the day before the paper was due and on the due date itself and thus would be unable to write on those days, he completed the final draft two days before the due date. This reduction in available time meant that he completed the paper only a week after turning in the first research paper for the course, a week during which he consistently worked ten-hour days at his job. Moreover, he closed on a house on the Friday before the paper was due and then moved all of his family’s possessions into the house over the weekend. Yet by the time he completed the paper on Monday, he had written three drafts, although his third is for the most part simply a typed version of his second.
The deadline may have affected Cora's revising processes more than it affected the processes of her classmates. Having completed roughly half of her paper by Monday evening and having printed out that half, she had returned to the University's computer laboratory on Tuesday evening to complete the paper. However, at about nine o'clock Tuesday night, when she tried to print out a copy after having completed all but the final few paragraphs of her paper, she found herself unable to do so—and also found that the computer laboratory's employees had all left for the evening. In desperation, she drove to the building where she is employed, implored security personnel to let her in, and, because the computer at her office was not compatible with the University's computers, retyped her entire paper, with hard copy of only the first half of the paper as a guide. She finally completed the paper at about six o'clock on Wednesday morning.

Finally, Tommy's process suggests that some students do not change their revising tactics greatly even when given more time to complete the assignment. As already discussed, Tommy hoped to turn in on Friday a paper which was not due until Monday. After completing a handwritten rough draft by three o'clock in the morning, he slept until about six o'clock, then got up and typed the paper on a word processor, revising as he typed, after which he sprinted across campus to hand the paper in to Ms. Kramer just before class ended at 9:30 A.M. Later
in the day, after he had examined a second printout of his paper and had discovered that the paper contained various spelling errors, he contacted Ms. Kramer and received permission to revise his paper further and hand it in on Monday, the actual due date. Over the weekend, however, he made very few other changes besides adding three sentences and correcting the spelling errors—even though, as will be discussed later in the chapter, he suspected that his paper might have considerable defects in another respect.

Deadlines notwithstanding, as a group, the six students seem to have revised at least as extensively as most other groups described in this study, other than the honors students who were completing senior theses, described in Chapter Eight. All three students who wrote their first drafts longhand deleted or added several sentences during revision, revisions which are on a larger scale than those ventured by many of the other students in the sample. However, these three students seemed rather reluctant to change a sentence’s basic structure once they had written the sentence: other than the addition or deletion of sentences, almost all changes these students made were at the word-choice level.

Junior wrote two longhand drafts and then typed up the final version on a word processor, with the typed version almost identical to the second draft. From the first draft to the final version, he reversed the order of two of the paper’s seven paragraphs, deleted four sentences, added seven, and
moved one. Of the remaining 32 sentences, almost half remained unchanged through all three versions, and most of the rest were revised only at the single-word or punctuation levels, with five revised at the phrase or clause level. The two handwritten versions contain roughly ten crossouts apiece, all involving changes of no more than a word or two, suggesting that Junior did not revise extensively within a draft, but instead made most of his changes from draft to draft.

Similarly, after Tommy’s handwritten first draft, he added a six-sentence segment in the word-processed version which he briefly turned in on Friday, and then added three other sentences, each in a different paragraph, in the eighty-sentence final draft which he turned in on Monday. Crossouts and words added above or below the line indicate that Tommy revised almost exactly two-thirds of the sentences in his first draft, usually at the word-choice level but sometimes at the phrase or clause level. Once that first draft was completed, most of Tommy’s sentences remained unchanged through the two remaining drafts, with the few changes occurring mainly at the error-correction or word-choice level. Only ten percent of the sentences from the completed first draft were later changed at the phrase or clause level.

Of the three students who wrote their first drafts longhand, Velma seems to have revised the most extensively. Apparently, Velma had difficulty getting started: her rough
drafts include a page containing three false starts, some of which contain sentences which eventually appear in the actual paper. After this, the first complete draft is full of crossouts, sentences added in the margins, and arrows moving sentences to other places within the essay. Moreover, even after this extensive revision while composing the first draft, Velma deleted nine sentences while writing the second draft. However, other than this nine-sentence deletion, Velma did little revising after completing the first draft. No new sentences were added in revision; almost sixty percent of the sentences in the final copy are worded exactly as in the first draft; and most of the sentences that have been changed are changed only at the word-choice or error-correction level. Only seventeen percent of the sentences were changed at the phrase or clause level after the first draft was completed. Like Jacki in Chapter Five only on a smaller scale, Velma appears to do her most significant revising while composing the first draft.

Nine of Junior's twelve sentence-level changes occur in the opening paragraph or the beginning of the second paragraph, while Velma's first four paragraphs not only contain most of the few phrase-level and clause-level revisions she made after completing the first draft, but also contain more revisions made during the composing of the first draft than do other paragraphs of her paper. Possibly both students revised heavily at first, then grew weary and
somewhat careless as they reached later stages of their papers; possibly both revised extensively while struggling to find their voices at first, but gained confidence as they went; or possibly both were especially concerned with the opening, wishing to gain the reader's interest and make a good first impression. Conceivably, too, the opening paragraphs were more extensively revised simply because the authors could contemplate those paragraphs throughout their composing sessions, whereas they presumably turned away from their texts soon after writing the later paragraphs.

Steve, Cora, and Scott, the three students who composed exclusively or almost exclusively on word processors, left much less physical evidence of their revising processes than did the three students who composed their first drafts longhand. Unless it can be compared with an earlier draft, a printed copy provides no evidence of revisions made prior to the author's printing out that copy.

What is easier to discover is the image as a reviser each student chose to project. All three were, of course, aware that Ms. Kramer wished to see evidence of extensive revision. In response to this situation, and perhaps in response to their need to maintain a certain self-image, the students consciously created images of their revising practices, images which did not wholly correspond with reality. These images, as will become clear by the end of the chapter, affected the grades and comments the papers received from Ms. Kramer.
When interviewed, Steve said that to accommodate Ms. Kramer's desire for evidence of an extensive writing process, he had printed hard copy at times when he ordinarily would not have done so. The package of materials Steve turned in to Ms. Kramer contains four printouts besides the final copy of the paper. The first printout contains only his notes, arranged year by year from 1956 through 1960, as described earlier in this chapter. In subsequent printouts, material from early years is expanded from notes into paragraphs while material from later years remains in note form. With each printout, the paragraphs extend further into the years covered, while the notes recede. If looked at only briefly, the material seems to suggest extensive revision: lots of pages, seemingly a number of drafts, an essay gradually taking shape before one's eyes, apparently growing through revision.

Examined more closely, however, the printouts tell a different story. One paragraph was originally placed out of chronological order and is moved in the final version, one sentence is added to the opening paragraph from one draft to the next, and a phrase from the beginning of one sentence has been moved to the end of the same sentence in the final version. But other than these matters, once a segment is expanded from notes into a paragraph, that paragraph remains unchanged through all subsequent printouts, including the final copy. Ordinarily, one could argue that perhaps Steve had revised each paragraph extensively before printing it out;
as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, however, Steve in fact did virtually no revising.

Although Cora composed her paper in an almost frantic struggle after the word-processing problems described earlier, she, too, she printed out hard copy at least once specifically to please Ms. Kramer. Cora described herself as even going a step further by making changes in ink on the printed-out copies before making the same changes on the word processor, even though she found it easier and less time-consuming to make changes directly on the screen without recourse to hard copy. Like Steve, Cora accumulated an impressive number of pages of text besides the final draft. Once again, because each version is longer than the one before--first a handwritten start containing only four paragraphs, then a printout roughly half the length of the final paper, then a longer printout, and finally the finished copy--the paper seems to grow before our eyes as a result of revision.

However, a closer examination once again belies the first impression. With the possible exception of an added citation, the inked-in changes are invariably small-scale: in six typed pages, there are ten corrections of errors (most simply typographical, as in a change from "gatered" to "gathered"), one one-word deletion, one three-word deletion, and one substitution of three words for two other words. Ironically, those last two changes, the only ones involving more than a single word, both actually harm the essay by creating errors
not found in the earlier version. For example, Cora changed "Dr. King believed that if a man would not die for something" to "Dr. King believed that if a man was not willing die for something." Other than these minor differences, material from one printout reappears unaltered in all subsequent printouts.

The four handwritten paragraphs of Cora's first draft, however, give evidence of somewhat more extensive revision. The first paragraph of the handwritten version becomes the fourth paragraph in the final copy, with paragraphs two, three, and four of the handwritten version becoming paragraphs one, two, and three, respectively, in the final copy. Also, while no sentences have been added or deleted from handwritten version to final copy, four of the handwritten version's eight sentences have been changed at the phrase level, and all eight have been changed at the error-correction level. This somewhat more extensive revision again demonstrates that word-processor printouts hide the revising process to a large degree.

Scott responded to Ms. Kramer’s desire for evidence of extensive revision in a way far different from that of Steve and Cora. As already discussed, Scott valued his ability to write well, and to do so without exerting a great deal of effort. Moreover, he had been a tutor in his previous college's Writing Center; he knew that Ms. Kramer was not a full-time faculty member and in fact worked for her primary income in a field unrelated to writing; he possessed a
bachelor's degree, which was also the most advanced degree which Ms. Kramer held; and he had submitted fiction to magazines, and during interviews attributed the fact that his fiction had been rejected not due to any defects in his fiction, but to the fact that "I sent my stuff out to a lot of places at once, and editors don't like simultaneous submissions." In summary, although he never said anything negative about Ms. Kramer during his interviews, it seems likely that he viewed her as an equal rather than as an authority figure. Gender roles may also have influenced Scott's view of Ms. Kramer, since Scott projected the confident self-reliance stereotypically associated with males, while Ms. Kramer took pride in nurturing the less assertive, more uncertain, students.

Whether or not for the reasons suggested above, Scott did not comply with Ms. Kramer's desire for evidence of extensive revision. "I told her with the first paper that we would have a problem, because I don't do first drafts per se," he said. He added that whether he is writing a college paper or a short story, he customarily composes on the word processor, then rereads the entire text on the screen, making whatever changes he deems necessary before printing out the final (and only hard) copy. "I'm usually happy with, and I quote what I said to her, what I write the first time," he added. "I'll go through and make little cosmetic changes, but nothing major."
An intelligent man, Scott surely knew that his approach to revision might displease Ms. Kramer. However, given his already-mentioned statement, "I don’t think it’s really teaching when you tell someone what to write and how to write it," he evidently was not one to change his writing process in order to please a teacher.

Predictably, Scott handed in far less pre-final-draft writing than did any of the other five students. The others averaged almost 25 pages of pre-final-draft material apiece, ranging from Junior’s 13 pages to Tommy’s 46 pages. In contrast, Scott handed in three pages: his single page of sketchy notes, a handwritten version of the outline he later typed, and a printout of the first page of his paper before final-draft corrections. When interviewed, Scott stated that he had printed out that page "just for her [Ms. Kramer’s] benefit." While Steve and Cora consciously tried to appear to be extensive revisers, Scott may have consciously tried to give the opposite impression about himself.

Once again, however, images may be deceiving. The single page of printed-out draft is admittedly a limited sample, containing only ten sentences. In addition, the ten sentences come from Scott’s opening paragraph, and as already discussed, students’ opening paragraphs are sometimes revised much more extensively than the rest of their essays. Nevertheless, one of the ten sentences in Scott’s draft has been deleted in his final copy, while two other sentences have been added.
Furthermore, all of the remaining nine sentences have been changed at the word-choice level, and eight of the nine have been restructured at the phrase or clause level. Also, Scott may have made still more changes before printing out this one-page sample. Ironically, if Scott revised the rest of the essay as extensively as he revised the small section he had printed out, then he was probably the most active reviser among the six students.

Finished Papers, Grades, and Comments

The Papers

Because of certain matters related to the grades and comments the six students' papers received from Ms. Kramer, I arranged for the students' papers to be retyped so that the students' names, as well as the grades and comments the papers had received, would not appear on them, and then asked six experienced First-Year Composition teachers to rank them from best to worst. I did not tell the teachers what grades and comments the papers had received. Although there was relatively little agreement among the individual teachers' ratings, Tommy's paper received the highest average, with four of the six teachers rating it as the best; Velma's paper had the second highest average; Scott's had the third highest average; Junior's had the fourth highest average; Cora's had the fifth highest average, with three of the six teachers ranking it as the weakest of the papers; and Steve's had the lowest average. Although the teachers were not asked to
comment on the quality of the papers, at least two of the teachers volunteered that they did not consider any of the six papers to be particularly good.

Tommy’s paper certainly makes lively reading, as the following example demonstrates:

Later summer, 1692, on Gallows Hill, George Jacob’s stood on the scaffold with four others. One of the doomed recited the Lord’s Prayer in front of the huge audience that had gathered for the hangings. At this point the people in the crowd began to sob and cry. Because of this, one magistrate assured the crowd that the Devil’s tricks were to invade the souls of the most unlikely persons and he said that the Devil is never more the Devil when he appears most like an Angel of Light (Thorndike 85).

Both in choice of details and in style, Tommy appears to have a flair for the dramatic. His paper is unified around a thesis, and one paragraph contains impressive analysis, although not analysis originating with Tommy, correlating the witch trials with socioeconomic forces. The citations follow MLA form fairly closely, and roughly 80 percent of them provide accurate information which would reader to find the cited passage in a library.

However, the one paragraph of analysis notwithstanding, most of Tommy’s paper is like the paragraph already quoted: a narrative, aiming to do little more than to tell an interesting story. The thesis which unites Tommy’s paper—"There were no witches in Salem, Massachusetts"—simply states what most adult readers already know. The paper contains an average of about eight errors in spelling, punctuation, and
grammar per page, mainly apostrophe errors, as in the quoted passage’s "George Jacob’s stood," and comma errors, as in the absence of a comma before the quoted passage’s "and he said."

Finally, the paper contains rather extensive plagiarism: roughly 20 percent of the paper, including portions of the quoted passage, is copied essentially verbatim, without quotation marks, from sources, although almost always with parenthetical citations.

Velma’s opening paragraph clearly establishes the paper’s focus:

All men should have the right to be born free and Carlos Romulo fought for that freedom all of his life. From his earliest years Carlos dreamed of living in a free country. Someday his beloved Philippines would be independent and he would once again be a free man.

Velma’s paper also has the advantage of being about a person less familiar to most readers than are the subjects of most of the other papers discussed in this chapter. In addition, the paper occasionally contains impressively worded sentences, such as "His family was missing, he had lost all his wealth, and had nothing left but his uniforms, his speaking voice and his unpublished book (Heroes). The citations follow MLA form fairly closely, and over 90 percent of them provide accurate information which would allow a reader to find the cited passage in a library. Furthermore, although the essay contains roughly five errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page, most of the errors are relatively minor, with comma errors predominating.
Unfortunately, Velma sometimes seems to lose sight of the ideas which focused her paper’s introduction so successfully. Some paragraphs do little more than to summarize Romulo’s accomplishments, like a resume in paragraph form:

Romulo served in the U.S. Army from 1941–44 as General MacArthur’s aide de camp in Bataan, Corregidor and Australia (Contemporary). He rose from the rank of colonel in 1942 to brigadier general in 1944 (McGraw). He was appointed Secretary of Information in President Quezon’s War Cabinet in Washington, D.C. from 1943 to 1944. From 1944 to 1945 he was Acting Secretary of Public Instruction for the Philippines (Year Book).

As the citations in the above quotation make clear, despite Velma’s having read at least parts of three books by Romulo, in her paper she relies mainly on brief entries from reference works as sources. She also relies heavily on quotations, none of which is introduced with a speech tag identifying the source of the quotation; in fact, the paper ends with two quotations, the first 32 words long and the second 92 words long, without so much as a speech tag before them and, in the case of the second one, without even a citation afterwards. Finally, while it contains some impressively-worded sentences, Velma’s paper also contains a few misleading, even unintentionally comic, sentences, such as "On July 1, 1924 Romulo married Virginia Llamas and they had four sons" (Contemporary). Finally, Velma’s paper is slightly plagiarized, with four sentences copied more or less verbatim from sources without quotation marks.
Like Velma, Scott begins his paper with a clear statement of focus: "Theodore Roosevelt (Teddy, TR), though controversial at times, was one of the most potent and innovative presidents of the century." Perhaps significantly, given Scott's refusal to deviate from his stated patterns in other ways, as well, the paper is structured largely the way Scott had said that it would be when interviewed just a few hours after he had selected his topic, when he stated that he would begin with the formative years and eventually discuss the building of the Panama Canal. It also reflects Scott's delight in Roosevelt's personality and in colorful quotations:

When the Colombian senate denied the U.S. access, TR said, "I do not think that the Bogata lot of jack rabbits should be allowed permanently to bar one of the future highways of civilization."

However, while some of Scott's paper does describe ways that Roosevelt was politically innovative, as the opening sentence implies that the paper will do, much of the paper is simply an admiring, rather breathless-paced summary of Roosevelt's accomplishments as President:

After winning the election of 1904, TR went on with the many pet projects he'd had in mind for some time. He initiated the Hepburn Act to regulate interstate railroad rates and then founded the Pure Food and Drug Act. The naturalist side of him pushed to add 194 million acres to the national parks system to avoid commercial use. U.S. expansion was also a priority with the president. With the implementation of the Roosevelt Corollary, an addition to the Monroe Doctrine which barred the European powers from having any influence in the Americas, TR made the world recognize the United States as a world power. It was during this time that he coined the phrase which would become his trademark, "Speak softly and carry a big stick."
Also, while Scott's paper starts with a clear statement of focus, that focus is not always maintained. The above quotation demonstrates that loss of focus, for the above quotation is the paper's closing paragraph. Although the paragraph, and thus the essay, ends with Roosevelt's best-known statement, the paragraph does not summarize the essay or provide a feeling of conclusion. In addition, the paper contains an average of over six errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page, including obvious typographical errors such as "After winning the election."

Finally, while Scott avoids plagiarism except for a single sentence of more or less verbatim copying without quotation marks, his Works Cited page lists, in all capital letters, only the authors and the titles of books, not city, publisher, or date of publication. In addition, fewer than half of Scott's citations provide accurate information which would allow a reader to find the cited material in a library.

Like Scott, Junior adopts an admiring tone toward his subject. In fact, despite his political conservatism, Junior throughout the paper discusses Kennedy in a tone which borders on the reverential:

Historians believe that if J.F.K. had lived he would have gone on to a second term in office. This would have meant four more years to lead this country on to greatness. His fate would not allow this to happen. On Friday November 22, 1963 . . .

Like Velma and Scott, Junior states a clear thesis early, ending the first paragraph with the sentence, "[John F.
Kennedy] stood out when the United States needed someone to
pull us together, the rich and the poor, the black and the
white (personal experience)." He also returns to this central
idea in his conclusion, as the paper's last two sentences
describe Kennedy as having sought "to unite everyone into a
common goal. That goal was to be the best that they could
be!" Junior also supports this central idea throughout, with
one of the paper's six body paragraphs dealing with Kennedy's
social programs for the poor, another dealing with his efforts
on behalf of integration at The University of Mississippi, and
most of the others either portraying Kennedy as inspiring and
uniting Americans through such things as the space program or
else as promoting common worldwide goals such as a nuclear
testing agreement. Also, while the essay contains an average
of roughly six errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
per page, most are relatively unobtrusive, chiefly comma
errors and misspelled words.

However, Junior's paper also demonstrates his lack of
experience with research and with research papers, as well as
his lack of time in which to conduct research and to write.
Although ten works are listed on the Works Cited page, the
paper contains only five parenthetical citations, citing a
total of four sources. Moreover, the citations usually seem
unnecessary, as when one a citation is placed after sentences
discussing Kennedy's support for the U.S. space program and
John Glenn's space flight. In fact, the paper contains no
information which could not be found in almost any encyclopedia entry about Kennedy. At least three of the five parenthetical citations do not provide accurate information which would allow a reader to find the cited material in a library. Finally, although the assignment called for the paper to be five to seven typed pages, Junior’s paper is only three pages long, even with rather large type and wide margins. In short, Junior’s paper resembles a slightly overgrown 500-word theme more than it resembles the sort of research paper Ms. Kramer had assigned.

Cora’s paper, in turn, resembles an outline with annotations added. The following passage is typical of the paper’s format:

III. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s accomplishments:
   A. 1963--Letter from Birmingham jail--During the spring of this year Dr. King campaigned to end segregation at lunch counters which drew nationwide attention when dogs and firehoses were turned on the demonstrators. This campaign resulted in the jailing of Dr. King and other supporters which included schoolchildren.

Despite the organization suggested by structuring the paper as an expanded outline, Cora’s paper lacks any thesis beyond an implicit "Martin Luther King was a great man." Rather than stating a central point in the opening paragraphs, Cora uses the first two paragraphs to list where and when King was born, what degrees he earned from which universities, what his wife’s name was, and how many children he and his wife had. Rather than reemphasizing a central point, the final paragraph
reads, "In 1983, Congress passed a federal holiday honoring Dr. King. The day celebrated on the third Monday in January." In between, the essay summarizes events from King's life while providing little or no commentary on those events. At one point, Cora devotes over a page to a 261-word quotation from King's "I Have a Dream" speech—yet she says nothing about the speech prior to the quotation other than to describe it as "famous and stirring" and to name the date, location, and size of the crowd for the speech, and she says nothing at all about the speech after the quotation. The essay contains a few factual errors, notably the statement that King died from a wound to his shoulder. The essay also contains an average of over eight errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar per page, including highly noticeable lapses such as nonstandard verb forms ("The quest have caused," "A second attempt influence Johnson," "Many people in this march was beaten," etc.). Not only are the citations and the Works Cited page noticeably out of MLA form, but only about half of the citations contain accurate information which would allow a reader to find the cited material in a library. Finally, the paper is rather extensively plagiarized: roughly 25% of the paper consists of largely verbatim copying from sources without quotation marks.

Steve's paper is the least prone to errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar of any of the six, averaging only about three errors per page, most of them relatively
unobtrusive. However, while Cora establishes at least an implicit thesis regarding King's greatness by listing his accomplishments, Steve's paper lacks even an implicit thesis. The material, under subheadings by years, simply covers whatever events caused Miller to receive publicity in national magazines from 1956 through 1960. Thus, the paper discusses Miller's experiences with the House Un-American Activities Committee, his writings during the late 1950's, and his marriage with Marilyn Monroe, but establishes no connections among these three strands of material. Steve's paper also contains parenthetical citations of only six works, not all of which are listed in the handwritten Works Cited list, a list which contains several works not parenthetically cited and which seems to have been copied from library cards: Library of Congress call numbers are included, and the entries are not in anything resembling standard format. Finally, while not all citations provide accurate information allowing the reader to find the cited passage in a library, once the sources are located, it becomes evident that roughly 90 percent of Steve's paper is copied verbatim from his sources without quotation marks. Other than a few topic sentences, virtually nothing in the paper is in Steve's own words. (Thus, the reason for the claim that Steve did virtually no revising becomes clear: most of his sentences are worded identically to sentences in his sources.)
Before this discussion of the students' papers is concluded, a few points should be mentioned about the plagiarism. First, because the matters which had caused me to ask six First-Year Composition teachers to rate the papers did not have to do with plagiarism, I did not tell the six teachers that some of the papers were partly plagiarized. Thus, the plagiarism played no direct role in the ratings the teachers assigned to the papers.

Second, as was true throughout the entire sample, I did not check these students' citations against the wordings of their sources until I began writing the relevant chapter of this study, roughly two years after I had observed and interviewed the students. Thus, by the time I discovered the plagiarism, I would no longer have been able to locate some of the students, and I would have been in the uncomfortable position of asking the others to try to recall whether or not they had intended to cheat on their research papers two years previously. Thus, I did not attempt to ask any of the students whether or not their plagiarism had been intentional, including those students discussed in other chapters of this study.

In most cases, both within this chapter and in the sample as a whole, the plagiarism was surely unintentional. Not only did the students' parenthetical citations usually (but not always) name the page from which the material was plagiarized, but also Cora, Steve, and Velma all handed in, as
required by Ms. Kramer, photocopies of the cited pages, thus providing copies of the very sources from which they had plagiarized.

Steve, especially, appears to have made an honest mistake, the result of his naivete regarding American research papers. During one interview, he said,

Here, they emphasize a lot on plagiarism. In England, they don’t do that so much. A lot of my friends who were intelligent, they just copied a lot out of the book, and they’d get an A level, which is very high in the British system. This is why it takes me a bit of time, because she emphasized before the course started about how it’s a big offense. In England you’d do a project, and you’d have backup documentation, but it didn’t matter where you got the words from. So I had gotten into the habit of just getting books and writing everything down, copying a lot. But here, I’ve had to watch what I’m doing, which is fair enough.

In a Bakhtinian sense, Martin’s experiences in Britain were too large a voice for him to overcome in the matter of plagiarism. Nevertheless, his intentions were honest.

But Tommy, who had fabricated information in a high-school research paper and then had submitted that paper for a grade in two different classes without telling either teacher that he had done so, was another matter. Tommy did not hand in photocopies of cited pages. Furthermore, when interviewed, he stated that because he was uncertain whether the notes he had taken on his key article were in his own words or copied, he was also uncertain as to whether he had plagiarized when dealing with that article in his paper. (As it turned out, the article was his main, but not his only, source of
plagiarism.) When asked whether or not he wanted to go by his real name in the study (this was prior to the decision to use pseudonyms for all participants in the study) Tommy replied, "Use my real name unless you’re going to say something embarrassing about me, like that the paper was plagiarized. If you’re gonna do that, use this fake name that I use to receive mail in a post office box." And he wrote down a pseudonym.

Granted, Tommy was not certain he had plagiarized. After stating his uncertainty about whether his notes were paraphrased or copied, he said, "When I was writing my paper I changed the wording anyway. So hopefully most of it has been changed at least two times."

Perhaps so. Tommy’s first draft does contain frequent crossouts, and he did reword many sentences in later drafts. However, the changes are often minimal. Moreover, as already mentioned, Tommy handed the paper in on a Friday, then noticed some spelling errors and received permission to resubmit the paper on Monday, the actual due date. Although he corrected the spelling errors and added a few sentences over the weekend, he did not attempt to compare his paper’s wordings with the wordings from his sources. Evidently, the fact that he liked Ms. Kramer and considered himself to be "in good karma" with her did not create in him an obligation to be certain that he had not plagiarized.
Even beyond the plagiarism, the students' papers were rather disappointing. Despite their high regard for Ms. Kramer, the students had ignored not only her advice about notetaking technique, but also her suggestions that they define the task in reasonably ambitious ways. Despite Ms. Kramer’s urgings that the students choose topics they cared about and select an unusual set of five years in the lives of the prominent persons about whom they wrote, and despite her exercises requiring students to react to what they read, most of the students defined the task as an informative report about the five years in which a famous person achieved his best-known accomplishments, unified by a thesis which generally stated little more than that this famous person was a great man.

Grades and Teacher’s Comments

Despite their problems, all of the papers received high grades. However, Scott’s paper received a lower grade than the others, and Ms. Kramer’s written comments on Scott’s paper were negative, unlike her comments on the other five students’ papers.

Tommy’s paper, Junior’s paper, Steve’s paper, and Velma’s paper all received A’s, Cora’s paper received an A−, and Scott’s paper received a B.

Ms. Kramer’s written comments on the papers give little clue as to her evaluation procedures. Although she occasionally circled a misspelled word or added a comma, Ms.
Kramer wrote no comments on the pages containing the bodies of the papers. Either on the title page, the top of the first page, or the Works Cited page, she wrote the grade, accompanied by a comment. The comments are always brief, and in all cases except Scott’s, consist entirely of praise. The comments on Cora’s, Junior’s, and Steve’s papers, in their entirety, are almost identical: "Good research--interesting" (Cora’s), "Good paper--very interesting" (Junior’s), and "Good research--interesting, well-written" (Steve’s). Tommy’s paper received no comments or corrections; perhaps Ms. Kramer had already written comments and corrections on the earlier version she had received, a version she never returned to Tommy. Velma’s paper received the most enthusiastic praise of the six. Ms. Kramer wrote, "Velma--This is a teacher’s ‘dream paper’--your research is excellent, prewriting moves beautifully from sources to paper."

Scott’s paper, however, received a different reception. Not only did it receive the lowest grade of the six, but while the others received exclusively favorable comments, Scott’s paper received exclusively negative comments. On a precis Scott had included with the paper, beside a claim that the paper would "[take] into account all views" of Roosevelt, Ms. Kramer wrote, "Too broad a promise"; beside the first entry on the Works Cited page, she wrote "publisher, date for each"; and beside the grade, she wrote, "Need an ending--reader is left hanging--was there no prewriting?"
These negative comments are undoubtedly accurate. The paper does fail to take into account all views of Roosevelt; the Works Cited page does lack basic information; the paper does stop without a sense of closure, leaving the reader hanging. Add to this list the paper's limited amount of original analysis, its occasional lack of organization, the citations which fail to provide information leading the reader to the cited work, and the errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and one could argue that the grade of B was generous. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, when six First-Year Composition teachers rated the papers without knowing anything about the authors of the papers, Scott's paper received a composite rating higher those received by three of the other five papers. Why did Ms. Kramer point out the admittedly obvious problems in Scott's paper, but not the even more obvious problems in some of the other papers?

Ms. Kramer's perception of Scott's attitude was surely a factor. As is evident from Ms. Kramer's student-centered classroom style, her interview comments about getting students to love writing (no "stilted pens"), and her high grades and favorable comments on most of the papers, she sought to develop students' self-confidence, especially regarding their writing. Interviewed after the semester, she frequently commented on ways the course had improved the students' self-images. Of Velma, whose paper received the most glowing written comments of the six, she said, "When Velma came into
the class, she felt so unconfident about everything, like, "Well, here I am back in school, but I don’t know anything, and all these kids are so smart." I worked specifically with her to get her ego up." Of Cora, Ms. Kramer said, "She felt like she wasn’t a good writer at all. So I think Cora moved a long way during this class. She needs more successes along these lines." Ms. Kramer said that she was pleased with Tommy’s progress because Tommy "did not come in knowing how to do research writing." She also said that Tommy had chosen his research topic in "a really good way"—by reacting to a class discussion of another student’s topic. And she also described ways that the class helped Steve socially during a difficult time in his life.

While Ms. Kramer took pride in nurturing students who needed help, Scott cultivated a self-confident, almost arrogant, image. In this respect, he not only made it difficult for Ms. Kramer to like him; he also gave her no opportunity to feel good about herself as a teacher.

Furthermore, Ms. Kramer values writing which changes the writer’s attitude. She stated that Junior probably did not at first like John F. Kennedy, then added, "But I think he found out some things during his research that made him like Kennedy. And I love it when that happens. With Cora, too, she found out some things in her research that made her feel more true to her black community." Although Scott openly took delight in learning more about Roosevelt, his self-assured
persona probably would not allow him to appear changed by what he had learned—and certainly not to appear that way before Ms. Kramer.

Finally, Ms. Kramer valued writing produced through a long, recursive writing process. Furthermore, she measured the student’s writing process through a combination of the student’s classroom behavior, the research log, and the ideally sloppy-looking by-products created prior to a final draft. Of Tommy, who handed in 46 pages of other writing along with the final draft of his Witch Trials paper, she said, "I love his prewriting. He does a lot of good prewriting. He seemed to benefit from process writing as much as anyone in the class." She said of Junior, "His prewriting was as perfect as any I’ve ever seen. It was awesome. For the first paper he had page after page of stuff, where he’d done his cubing, his looping. It was really good." In explaining why she had called Velma’s paper a "dream paper," she stated:

Velma wouldn’t copy the source. She would read it, she would summarize it, maybe paraphrase it, she’d do some interpretation. And then from her notes she would write her paper, which is the way to do it. And that’s why I say it’s a dream paper. She’s moving from her sources beautifully to the paper, even though her English is not excellent. There are certainly many things she could do with just sentencing skills. But as far as process writing, she does perfect process research.

From Ms. Kramer’s perspective, Scott’s process must have seemed terrible. His journals entries surely must have protected his carefully-established persona by minimizing any
problems he encountered with the paper; he flatly told Ms. Kramer he that revised only minimally, if at all; and he seemed to confirm that statement when he turned in only about one-eighth as many pages of pre-final-draft writing as his classmates averaged. Ms. Kramer's comments about Scott during the final interview were unequivocal:

I was gonna whip--Scott's a very good writer. But he doesn't spend enough time doing prewriting, because he knows he's a good writer. So he didn't expand during the course. There was no prewriting for this paper. And that's part of it--that's the deal. I think he was just gonna rely on his basic good sense of judgment and writing ability. He may have harbored some resentment toward me for not giving him an A anyway, because he is a brilliant kid. But I have to face myself on stuff like that. I needed to make the point.

Scott himself may have missed the point. Interviewed after receiving the graded paper, he sounded a bit subdued, but said, "I'm satisfied with the grade. I had good content, but I forgot to push the spell-checker for one page, and I ended up with a lot of spelling errors. I just had to rush at the end typing it up, so I had too many mistakes." Scott's tendency to rationalize when his writing is rejected, perhaps useful for persevering in submitting fiction to magazines, may have prevented him from understanding his paper's reception from Ms. Kramer. At any rate, his explanation falls apart when examined. When interviewed after completing the paper but before receiving the grades and comments, Scott had described himself as having made the deadline "easily," not as being rushed at the end. Also, although Ms. Kramer did circle
a few misspelled words, none of her written comments on the paper even hint that spelling errors affected the grade. Instead, she wrote, "Was there no prewriting?"

Ironically, Scott’s researching and writing processes were more elaborate and involved more effort than Ms. Kramer realized. Still more ironically, Ms. Kramer had little opportunity to realize this because Scott’s self-image required him to hide the extent of his efforts, not only from Ms. Kramer but from me, and probably from his conscious self as well. Thinkers as disparate as Lev Vygotsky (144) and Peter Elbow ("internal cooking") argue that thinking about what one will write can be as effective as pages of "prewriting" in rehearsing one’s final draft. Although Scott produced only a single page of reading notes, the interviews attest to his careful, sophisticated research procedures. Moreover, previous research has sometimes suggested that visible evidence of the writing process--notes, number of changes during revision, and so forth--provides little or no indication of which students have the better process, as defined by the process’s leading to a successful final draft (Spivey 23-24; Taylor; Faigley and Witte).

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, visible evidence can be deceiving unless it is examined extremely closely. Steve, who produced an acceptable number of pages of pre-final-draft writing, in fact failed not only to revise, but to write, as opposed to simply copying without quotation marks.
In contrast, Scott, who produced scarcely any pages of non-final-draft writing, nevertheless may have revised rather extensively.

But to recognize any of this—Steve’s nonrevised plagiarism or Scott’s surprising revision—one must go through a dull, time-consuming process of scrutinizing page after page, comparing final copy not only to rough drafts but to photocopied pages from sources. Given the heavy demands on composition teachers’ time and energy already, few would undergo such drudgery. As a part-time instructor with a full-time job in another field and with no chance of achieving a full-time teaching job at the University without returning to school for years of graduate study, Ms. Kramer had little time or motivation to do so.

Ms. Kramer believed in teaching process, not product. Unfortunately, this chapter suggests that the process approach may at times result in an unfortunate corollary: "Grade image, not product." As Lad Tobin has noted, composition teachers, especially those who intervene in their students’ writing processes, would do well to apply reader-response theory to their readings of student texts, thus recognizing the subjectivity involved. No teacher can be wholly unbiased, of course. But the very qualities that made Ms. Kramer an outstanding classroom teacher—her ability to establish personal relationships with her students, her belief in writing as self-expression, and her passionate commitment to
her beliefs about the writing process--also made her especially vulnerable to bias.

One final note: after the research papers, there remained the oral reports at the end of the semester. During her last interview, Ms. Kramer praised Cora and Velma for doing excellent oral reports--all the more praiseworthy, she said, because both had to overcome their previous insecurities in order to speak before a group. Scott's oral report, however, was described by Ms. Kramer as extremely disappointing. "Toward the end of this class," she said, "he really fell apart."

**Conclusions**

In many ways, this chapter demonstrates the advantages of some of Ms. Kramer's approaches to teaching in general and to the research-paper assignment in particular. Despite horrendous time pressures, the students described their research-paper experiences in positive terms. The students' comments testify to the effectiveness of Ms. Kramer's student-centered, writing-centered approach to the research paper. Encouraged to explore topics that they considered meaningful, the students felt motivated to learn more about those topics, and thus felt motivated to research more thoroughly. This commitment to their topics may help to explain why some students revised rather extensively, even in the face of uncompromising deadline pressures.
Nevertheless, the students' final products and the teacher's responses to those final products are profoundly disturbing, especially because the students' circumstances were in many respects ideal: the students had written research papers before and had generally received high grades on those papers; the class was taught by a skilled teacher whom the students liked and respected; and the teacher established the class as a discourse community, encouraged the students to choose personally meaningful topics, defined the task as one involving original analysis, and focused class time on the students and their writing. Yet the students by and large produced a batch of noninterpretive reports, marred to various degrees by lack of focus, word-for-word copying without quotation marks, failure to provide citations that accurately reveal the source of information, and a host of other basic problems. Furthermore, despite the papers' sometimes glaring problems, those papers received A grades and high praise, with the one exception seemingly caused not primarily by problems with the paper itself but by the student's refusal to "get with the program."

Much recent research in composition has emphasized the importance of the teacher--in defining the task, in producing a favorable classroom climate, in establishing a working relationship that motivates students to do their best--as an influence on the writing that students produce. Yet in this case, if one excludes responses to the finished product, the
teacher seems to have done almost everything well, and a group of relatively high-achieving students still produced extremely disappointing papers, their grades notwithstanding. Undoubtedly the rushed semester, combined with the students’ other time commitments, created obstacles, and perhaps those obstacles could not be surmounted by even ideal conditions in other respects. Thus, perhaps two lessons that this chapter demonstrates are that administrators and teachers must allow students adequate time to complete research-paper assignments, and that students who enroll for classes which require research papers must arrange their other commitments so that they can find adequate time to complete research-paper assignments.

However, other than the rushed schedule, conditions seemed ideal for the students to produce excellent papers. Moreover, although the abbreviated semester certainly created difficulties, experienced teachers know that in any given semester, something will create difficulties. We cannot wait for ideal conditions before judging how well an assignment works. If Ms. Kramer’s students, despite their many advantages in almost all respects except time, produced such disappointing research papers, and if research papers can be evaluated accurately only after the most exhaustive scrutiny by the teacher, then one must begin to question the efficacy of the research-paper assignment in First-Year Composition classes.
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Volume II

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Brian Ward Sutton, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1992

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CHAPTER VII
FOUR STUDENTS COMPOSING RESEARCH PAPERS IN AN ADVANCED COMPOSITION CLASS

The preceding three chapters of this study have examined the role of research-paper assignments in Basic Writing and First-Year-Composition classes. Except for the three seniors among the First-Year Composition students discussed in Chapter Six, the students discussed thus far had only tentatively selected a major and had not yet acquired college-level expertise within any particular academic discipline. In contrast, this chapter and the next one will examine the role of research-based writing in the educations of more advanced students. Six of the seven students discussed in these chapters were juniors or seniors; five of the six juniors and seniors had GPA's of 3.5 or higher; and four of the six juniors and seniors were researching and writing about topics within their majors. Thus, these two chapters, coming as they do after three chapters focusing on Basic Writers and First-Year Composition students, allow this study to explore issues such as:

--Do more advanced college undergraduates, especially those writing within their areas of expertise, approach researched-based assignments in fundamentally different ways from those of beginning college students?
--Should teachers of these more advanced students approach research-based assignments in fundamentally different ways from the ways such assignments should be taught to beginning college students?

Yet while the next two chapters both focus on students much more advanced than those in previous chapters, the two chapters also differ dramatically from one another in focus. Chapter Seven deals with four students in an Advanced Composition class, and so focuses on ways students' approaches to research-based assignments in Advanced Composition may differ from students' approaches to such assignments in Basic Writing and First-Year Composition. Chapter Eight, in turn, examines the ways that three honors students complete Senior Theses within their majors, thus focusing on the researching and writing processes of unusually competent undergraduate students who were conducting original research under the supervision of mentors within their majors and who produced much longer, more ambitious texts than those produced by any of the other students in the sample. Thus, while the students discussed in this chapter are, as a group, somewhat more competent as writers and researchers than those discussed in Chapters Four through Six, they are less competent as writers and researchers than those who will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

This chapter first describes the course, the students, the teacher, and the assignment, as well as the methods used in selecting and collecting data from these students and this teacher. Next, the chapter describes the students' processes
of selecting topics, defining the task and the audience, gathering and using information, writing the papers, and responding to suggestions of classmates and of the teacher for revising the papers. Finally, the chapter describes the finished papers, as well as the grades and comments those papers received.

**Background**

**The Course**

According to the catalog, the university’s 300-level composition class requires "extended essays" while introducing the aims and the types of discourse. The course is required of business and political science majors, is one of several courses satisfying a writing requirement for certain other majors, and may be taken for elective credit by students in any major. Most students taking the course are juniors.

**Sample Selection**

By the Spring 1990 semester, I had observed Basic Writers and First-Year Composition students, and I had arranged to observe honors students working on senior theses. To fill out the picture, I sought a group of students less advanced than the honors seniors but more advanced than the First-Year Composition students.

Wishing to observe students working on research papers in a discipline other than English, I contacted the teacher of a 300-level history course designed to introduce history majors to their discipline’s methods of conducting and writing about
research. (This history course is discussed in some detail in Chapter Eight.) Although my own teaching schedule forced me to arrive late for the one section of the history course being taught that semester, the teacher allowed me to sit in. He would not, however, allow me to take five minutes of class time to tell the students about my project and to ask for volunteers. Because class sessions consisted of two hours of uninterrupted lecture in a hot, stuffy, windowless room, the students were in no mood to linger after class to discuss my project with me. Moreover, the professor was unclear about what graded writing, if any, would be required of the students in the class; he seemed to prefer that the students conduct research, all on a single topic of his choice, after which he apparently hoped to write up the results for publication in a historical journal. Thus, my efforts in this class reached a dead end.

Because we were now almost a month into the semester, I needed to find a course quickly or lose a semester’s research time. The University’s Director of Composition suggested the 300-level composition course, a course which would satisfy my desire to work with intermediate students, although not my desire to observe students being initiated into the discourse of their academic disciplines. The teacher, Ms. Harris, was willing to cooperate, allowing me to tell the class about my project and offering extra credit to students willing to participate in the study. Four students volunteered, and I
worked with all four.

Data Collection

I sat in on Ms. Harris’s class, taking notes, throughout the 2 1/2 weeks in which the assignment discussed in this chapter was the chief focus of class time. I also interviewed the students individually, three to five times each, with the initial interviews taking place within two days after the assignment was given and the final interviews taking place after Ms. Harris had graded and returned the students’ papers. In addition, I interviewed Ms. Harris twice, both times after she had graded the papers. Of the seventeen interviews I conducted with persons discussed in this chapter, thirteen were audiotaped and four were reconstructed from notes.

Three of the four students provided photocopies of their rough drafts, with Ms. Harris’s written suggestions for revisions, as well as photocopies of their final drafts, with Ms. Harris’s grades and comments. Two also provided photocopies or originals of other working drafts of the same essays, as well as photocopies of written suggestions from classmates during peer editing. One student also provided his ungraded in-class writings and journal entries on topics related to the assignment. In addition, Ms. Harris provided copies of all handouts she used related to the assignment.

The Students

Basic information about the students, all of whom are Caucasian, is provided in Table 6 on page 395.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Coll. GPA</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Course Load</th>
<th>Hours/wk employed</th>
<th>Father's Education</th>
<th>Mother's Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kari</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>12 hrs.</td>
<td>about 25</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Accounting Finance</td>
<td>18 hrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>12 hrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Soph.</td>
<td>Business Marketing</td>
<td>9 hrs.</td>
<td>about 25</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kari was attending the University on an academic scholarship as part of the University’s honors program, called the Honors Scholars program within this study. (The program is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.) She said she was "right-brained" and despite her academic success portrayed herself as impulsive, undisciplined, and impractical. More specifically, she described herself as having difficulty with the research-paper assignment because of a variety of distractions: the probably-terminal illness of a grandmother living in another state, a death in the family of a friend, occasional troubles with her boyfriend, the responsibilities involved with living in an apartment for the first time in her life, becoming "temporarily financially embarrassed" after failing to meet some of those responsibilities, and working longer hours at her job to avoid further financial embarrassment. Despite all these worries, she was cheerful and talkative throughout our interviews. During the weeks when I attended Ms. Harris’s class, Kari was usually late to class, sometimes arriving more than halfway through the period. Around the end of the semester, Kari suddenly moved to a different apartment and got an unlisted phone number; as a result, I never received copies of Kari’s rough draft or her actual paper.

Zachary seemed almost stereotypical in some ways. He was the son of parents who, partly through education, had become far more financially secure than their own parents had been
and who wanted their son to graduate from college and succeed in business. Prior to attending the university, Zachary had graduated from one of the most exclusive (and expensive) prep schools in the region. Yet he described himself as unmotivated by money and indifferent to success in school, more concerned with having fun tonight than with passing an exam tomorrow. "Me and my dad have a lot of differences in the area of school," he said. Although officially majoring in Business Marketing, he was considering changing his major to music. But his musical tastes suggest that he might find a traditional university musical curriculum disappointing: during interviews, he talked in great detail about the fledgling rock band in which he played guitar, the band’s unsuccessful attempts to find paying gigs, and his plans to attend an upcoming Grateful Dead concert. In contrast, his responses to my questions about the research paper and about academics in general tended to be brief, unenthusiastic, and at times almost amnesiac. During the classes I observed, Zachary seemed at best indifferent, at worst passive-aggressive. During the silent moments while Ms. Harris handed back an assignment, Zachary asked, "What are we gonna do in class today?" and, without waiting for an answer, began whistling; asked by Ms. Harris whether or not he had a rough draft, at the start of a class period to be devoted to peer editing, he replied, "A what?"; during a class discussion of an essay in the textbook, he suddenly noticed that the author
had used sentence fragments and said, "All these years they whale on you for fragments. But this guy uses them and it's okay--because he's published! How come he can get away with this crap?"; and after announcing to Ms. Harris that he would be absent for a week in order to attend a Grateful Dead concert, he did disappear from class for a week--but upon returning, he told Ms. Harris that he had not attended the concert but had chosen not to attend class anyway. During our final interview, Zachary stated that he intended to drop out of the University and enroll in the community college's landscaping program so that he could work outdoors with his hands by day and play in his band by night.

Of the three students discussed in this chapter who were majoring in business-related disciplines, Martin was the only one who did not say that his interests really lay in some other area. When we set up appointments for our interviews, he noted the appointments on a computer-printout personal schedule which he apparently carried with him at all times. He had very few openings in that schedule; although he had no part-time job, his 18-hour class load, combined with his activities in the University's Student Senate and the University's Accounting Club, left him very little free time. During class sessions that I observed, Martin asked Ms. Harris extremely specific questions about citation form and about what was required to satisfy the assignment. As will become clear, Martin seemed torn between his urge toward self
expression and his belief that the surest way to succeed in any English class is to give the teacher exactly what he or she wants.

Wesley described himself as a manic depressive who had been in the region’s largest mental hospital for five separate stays. Perhaps not coincidentally, he had dropped out of and reentered college eight times. He was also an intelligent, self-aware, articulate man who took pleasure in what he called "holding forth" and who as a result was one of the most interesting and enjoyable persons to interview in the entire sample. He had already accumulated far more total credits than he needed for graduation, but because he had switched majors late in his academic career and because he had repeatedly transferred from one school to another, he was still 36 credits away from graduating in his new major. During the classes I observed, he was active in class discussion, took careful notes, and responded carefully and in great detail during peer editing. He was now an excellent student, a fact he attributed to a combination of experience, improved study habits, and declining standards in higher education. Unfortunately, he had already accumulated so many credit hours that his recent good grades had very little effect on his low cumulative GPA.

Despite their highly individual, sometimes rather quirky, traits, the four students share certain things in common. First, they come from somewhat more educated families than do
most of the students discussed in the previous chapters: three of the four reported that both of their parents had bachelor’s degrees, compared with only one of seventeen in the previous three chapters. Second, they come from somewhat more economically comfortable backgrounds than do most students discussed in the previous three chapters: all four portrayed their parents as at least firmly middle-class, and two, Zachary and Wesley, portrayed their parents as at least somewhat wealthy. Similarly, two of the three honors students who will be discussed in the next chapter reported that both their parents had bachelor’s degrees (and for three of those four parents, graduate degrees as well), and all three students discussed in that chapter come from financially comfortable families. Although the sample is small, it seems significant that while disadvantaged backgrounds are frequent among the this study’s beginning college students (most of them enrolled in Basic Writing and/or in an open-door community college), the students close to successful completion of a university degree come from far more elitist backgrounds. In a small way, this study may reinforce the points Mike Rose (Lives) and others have made about the hurdles students from nontraditional backgrounds face when they enter the academy.

Unlike most of the students discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the four students unanimously described their parents as stressing the importance of education. "In my
family, the question was not whether you would go to college, but where," Wesley said. "My brother is a college professor, and my sister has a master’s degree and was married to a professor at Columbia. It is an academic family. I am the black sheep." Martin’s father had recently started to take classes at a community college, not for career advancement but because "he just feels the need for more education." Kari recalled her parents often saying, "Education is the one thing nobody can take away from you, no matter what happens." In Bakhtinian terms, the voices of family members were telling these students that education--and thus a major assignment such as a research paper--matters, although Zachary, for one, evidently did not like what he was hearing.

In contrast, the students reported having received much different messages about education from their secondary schooling and from their college peers. Much like Jacki in Chapter Five, Martin and Kari reported that although they had earned high school GPA’s of 3.8 and 3.6, respectively, they "never studied" in high school. Interviewed separately, both used the same words to describe their high school education: "It was a joke." Both made exceptions to this generalization only in the case of high school English classes they took in which relatively lengthy (eight to ten pages, in Martin’s case) research papers with persuasive aims were required. Zachary, who could not remember his high school GPA despite having graduated only 2 1/2 years previously, stated that in
spite of his prep school’s formidable academic reputation, "a lot of kids there just didn’t study at all, including me and most of my friends."

Wesley, over twice the age of the other three students, recalled his own secondary education as a challenging experience among classmates highly motivated to learn. However, he did not portray his more recent educational experiences that way. He recalled writing a ten-page (handwritten) research report in third grade, complete with footnotes and bibliography. "And that paper was perhaps better than the one I’m doing for this class will be," he said. "Now I grant that I went to an unusually good elementary school, but nevertheless, times have changed." Wesley also pointed out, both to Ms. Harris during class and to me during an interview, how much easier it was to find plenty of parking spaces in the University’s student lots on rainy days. Interestingly, 20-year-old Zachary in a separate interview described a decline in student quality in terms almost identical to those 43-year-old Wesley used. Both stated that a generation earlier, students were interested in learning for its own sake, but that today’s students valued learning only insofar as it leads to a lucrative career. Ironically, these two students were majoring in Marketing and Accounting, respectively, while they described their true interests as lying in music and anthropology, respectively. At any rate, while all four students reported parental
encouragement to value education highly, none of the four seemed to have gotten similar messages from classmates or from the current educational system itself.

All four reported having completed previous research-paper assignments. Zachary and Martin had written research papers in both semesters of the University's required First-Year Composition sequence. As an Honors Scholar, Kari had been exempt from the First-Year Composition requirement, but she had written two research papers in high school and one for a college anthropology class. Martin also recalled writing an eight-to-ten page research paper for his high school senior English class—the one class he specified as an exception to his description of high school as "a joke"—and a short research paper for a college history class. Zachary did not mention writing research papers in high school, but the nature of the private school he attended suggests that he probably did so. Having taken college classes intermittently for 25 years, Wesley could not give an exact account of his research-paper experiences, but various of his statements indicated that he had written considerably more research papers than any of the other three students had.

While Zachary could not recall how he had done on previous research-paper assignments, the other three generally reported success. Martin described himself as having gotten A's and B's on previous research papers; Kari reported difficulty with her college anthropology paper ("I passed,
which was better than I expected") but said that she had received A's on her high school research papers; and Wesley said, "I've generally done well on short research papers."

Wesley's experiences with longer research papers, however, were a different story--a story which sheds light on recent theories about writing. Wesley stated that he had repeatedly dropped courses, and on more than one occasion had dropped out of school altogether, because of his inability to complete long research papers. He gave several reasons for his difficulties with longer papers. For one thing, he stated, shorter research papers are essentially "student stuff" in which one is expected merely to "come up with something that would make a nice little pamphlet for grade school students or whatever," but longer research papers are "scholar stuff" in which "not only are you going to report something, but you're going to say something worthwhile, something a bit new." In terms of Schwegler and Shamoon's study of the ways college students and college teachers define research-based writing, Wesley can be described as having mastered the research paper as it is defined by most students, but as shying away from attempting to write the research-based essay as it is defined by the academic community. Yet he ended his final interview with a statement advocating longer, more demanding research-paper assignments, a statement which will be reported near the end of this chapter.
Wesley’s other stated reasons for his inability to complete longer papers support current theories in composition stressing the need for flexibility. In a 1987 essay, Linda Flower notes that half of the students in her pilot study did not look closely at the writing prompt, but "simply invoked their ‘standard strategy’" (29), whether or not that strategy was appropriate for the task at hand. And in a 1980 article in *College Composition and Communication*, Mike Rose argues that an inflexible attitude toward rules and procedures for writing can result in writer’s block and difficulty meeting assignment deadlines ("Rigid"). Similarly, in describing his failures to complete longer research papers, Wesley repeatedly portrayed himself as unable to adapt his methods. He had given up on one research-paper assignment because he could find only two books on the topic he had chosen, on another because the books he found did not provide certain information he regarded as crucial to his topic. In both cases, he had dropped the class as a result. Asked why he had not tried to supplement his information through a periodicals search, he replied, "Most of the time when I’m doing a paper, it doesn’t occur to me to look for journal articles." Asked why he had not simply changed topics, he replied, "I have some difficulty doing that. When I decide to do something that’s interesting to me, I hate to give it up, even after I’ve decided I can’t do it." He also stated that for shorter papers he could simply put bookmarks in key pages of his sources and work out
the organization mentally, whereas longer papers required "the note card approach, juggling more and more sources and trying to keep track of which sources are relevant at what points. The way I do papers would break down when faced with those demands." He added that longer papers must be "chunked," that is, completed in sections over several sessions of writing, whereas he always preferred to write drafts "in one fell swoop." Summarizing his difficulties with longer papers, Wesley said:

I’m an underachieving slob, yet I’m also a perfectionist—a dangerous combination. When I get certain expectations about what’s involved, I want to meet those expectations or not do it at all. With long papers, the question comes up, "Do I want to put the necessary time and energy into this thing to meet my expectations?" And quite often the answer has been, "No."

Although Wesley is a far from typical student, his methods certainly epitomize the inflexible approach both Flower and Rose portray as trouble for students. Perhaps significantly, this same inflexibility was found in Chapter Five’s Joe, the only student in the entire sample who did not complete the research-paper assignment.

Teacher and Teaching Methods

Ms. Harris was a Caucasian assistant professor working on her doctoral dissertation. Although a literature specialist, she was well acquainted with much recent composition theory and research. She kept class sessions focused on the next graded writing assignment, often using ungraded in-class writing to maintain this focus. For example, shortly after
the research-paper assignment was given, the students were asked to write a journal entry on the topic, "What problems are you encountering so far in your paper?" While the students wrote, Ms. Harris went up and down the aisles, conferring with students individually about their topics and possible approaches to those topics. Nearer to the rough-draft deadline, another in-class writing, also conducted simultaneously with individual conferences, required the students to describe their assumed audience’s age level, education level, and special interests, as well as techniques of making the paper appeal to such an audience. Once rough drafts were complete, students peer edited each other’s work, after which Ms. Harris collected the rough drafts, later returning them with her written suggestions for revision.

Even when a class period’s central activity was more traditional, Ms. Harris often added in-class writing to that central activity in order to keep attention focused on the next graded essay. Prior to a class discussion of a textbook essay which mixed informative with persuasive discourse, Ms. Harris asked the students to find and write down five purely objective sentences from the essay and five subjective sentences from the essay. She used the exercise to demonstrate the point that at times it can be difficult to distinguish objective from subjective statements, a concept which was then applied to the students’ writing assignments.
Although Ms. Harris taught citation form in some detail, she tried not to allow format details to be blown out of proportion. For example, responding to a student’s question, she explained the rules for capitalizing titles in a bibliographic entry, but then added, "Of course, nobody’ll ever flunk you over capitalizing words in the title."

However, Ms. Harris was deeply concerned about plagiarism. During her first interview, without being asked, she brought up receiving papers from students who obviously could not have written them, as well as papers that seemed to be recycled from students’ high school English classes. She stated that when Martin first announced that he intended to write about shamanism, she feared that the paper would be plagiarized because "that’s not the sort of thing we normally get from our students," although she added that once she talked to him about the subject, she realized that Martin had arrived at the topic naturally and honestly. Later, in her comments on Martin’s rough draft, she wrote a warning that a certain sentence containing no quotation marks did not sound like his wording. Like Ms. Kramer in Chapter Six, she provided her students with the English Department’s handout on plagiarism and went over that handout in class. She also required the students to turn in their print sources along with their papers so that she could, according to her handout describing the assignment, "spot check for accuracy in quoting and paraphrasing." The same handout also warns that
plagiarism would cause the paper to receive an F.

Finally, Ms. Harris seemed somewhat discouraged with the research-paper assignment as she had used it in this course. Asked at the end of her final interview if there was anything else she wished to get on the record, she said,

Sometimes I question why I assign a research paper. There’s a compelling line of thinking these days that most research is discipline-specific, so that we don’t do any good by assigning generic research papers. I don’t know. And I always feel so frustrated by these papers when they do come in. By the 300 level, the students ought to be able to do better than this. I’d say only about 20 percent of the papers I receive are ones I would feel proud to have written as a student or ones I feel proud to receive as a teacher.

Dr. Norton and Ms. Logan, discussed in Chapter Four, and Dr. Montgomery, discussed in Chapter Eight, made similar points about the difficulty of teaching the research-paper assignment and the low quality of most students’ research papers. Thus, half of the eight teachers in the sample made such comments, in each case without being asked.

The Assignment

In keeping with the catalog course description, Ms. Harris had organized the course around the aims of discourse, as described in the required textbook, James Kinneavy’s Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition. During the course, students were to write three graded out-of-class essays, one with an expressive aim, one with a referential aim, and one with a persuasive aim. The research paper was also to be the referential essay. Thus, the paper was to be almost
exclusively informative. In fact, in her written comments on students’ rough drafts and final copies, Ms. Harris made clear that any sentences she perceived as primarily persuasive would hurt an essay’s grade. A handout Ms. Harris used to explain the assignment gave as examples of referential discourse the writing found in "textbooks, professional journals, the encyclopedia, the newspaper, and other sources (such as directions for taking medicine or using a new appliance)."

Students were free to choose any topic appropriate to referential discourse. The handout suggests only that the students "choose an interesting, limited topic (possibly related to your major field of study) and consider it in depth."

The paper was to be 800 to 1000 words long and was to cite three to five sources. When interviewed, Ms. Harris said of these requirements:

If I didn’t require sources, I’d have to make it a shorter paper, since they couldn’t provide that much information on their own. For some students, it’d be easier if I made it a longer paper with more sources. But if I required, say, 1500 words, some students would be out in the cold, because they wouldn’t be able to find enough to say.

These seem remarkable statements to make about an assignment for a junior-level class. But "remarkable" does not necessarily imply "incorrect." Zachary stated, "I have a hard time writing longer papers—like about 850 words or more."

The handout defines "sources" as "library materials such as periodicals and books, as well as interviews, pamphlets, and textbooks." During class discussion, Ms. Harris urged
students to consider using sources other than those traditionally found in the library.

Along with the paper, the students were required to turn in a brief description of the intended audience. The handout states:

In referential discourse, the writer is seen as the expert and must analyze the reader carefully to decide at what level to write to be understood (for example, expert to expert, expert to someone moderately knowledgeable, expert to novice). The text the writer creates must be crafted on the basis of the vocabulary, knowledge of the jargon of the field, and presumed knowledge of the reader.

Despite this statement, in class discussion Ms. Harris warned the students not to select a topic on which they were already experts. If they wrote on topics about which they were experts, Ms. Harris stated, they might have difficulty maintaining the detachment necessary for referential discourse, as well as difficulty staying within the maximum length.

Overall, then, Ms. Harris had created an assignment which employed Kinneavy's concepts to help students envision a detailed rhetorical setting for their writing. In this respect, she encouraged her students to adopt the relatively complex, heuristic, goal-setting strategies which Flower and Hayes describe as characteristic of more competent writers. Yet in required length, number of sources, and aim of discourse, the assignment required less of students than did the research-paper assignments given to many of the First-Year Composition and Basic Writing students discussed in previous
chapters, or even the assignments given to high school students in similar research-paper studies by Carol Kuhlthau and Loretta Haskell.

Other than Zachary, the students regarded the assignment as rather restricting. Martin said that he did not regard the assignment as a true research paper because it did not require a sufficient number of sources. More significantly, he felt uninspired by writing an informative paper based on sources because "you’re limited to the facts from your sources, so you can’t be very creative." Similarly, despite his problems with ambitious research-paper assignments in the past, Wesley compared this assignment unfavorably to the expressive essay, the persuasive essay, and even to my study, saying, "It’s not like I’m trying to present myself or something I strongly believe in, and it’s not like your dissertation, where the information you’re putting forth is something new. I’ll just be reporting somebody else’s facts."

Kari, too, lamented the sober practicality she saw as implicit in the assignment. She enjoyed the gamelike nature of literary analysis, taking pride in having written papers which "proved" that the trolls were victims and the hobbits and elves oppressors in J.R.R. Tolkien’s works and that Coleridge’s ancient mariner was gay, with the albatross a symbol of his inability to deal with his sexual preference. "Everyone who read it said, ‘You know that’s bullshit, but the way you wrote it, I can’t say you’re wrong,’” she said of the
Coleridge paper, laughing. To Kari, the referential paper offered no such possibilities for having fun.

Most of all, the free-spirited Kari was frustrated by the very element of the assignment many composition specialists would praise: its specific rhetorical situation. Kari described herself as an "instinctive writer," stating, "I just see how it turns out and then I go, 'Oh! Look what I did!'") Not surprisingly, she seemed inhibited by having to keep in mind her audience and the aim of her discourse. In her final interview, she said:

One of the harder things in this class, for me, is that I've had a very defined purpose for my writing. You have to be so conscious of what you're saying: are you having it right? Are you trying to persuade or simply informing? And when I became conscious of what I was trying to do, it affected my style. The writing became stilted, contrived.

As will be discussed in the next part of this chapter, the limitations imposed by the assignment strongly influenced the students' choices and strategies throughout their processes of completing that assignment.

The Research Paper Processes

Topic Selection and Task Representation

Characteristically, Ms. Harris used ungraded writing to help the students find topics which would interest them, requiring a journal entry listing five possible topics for the paper. When the students selected their topics, however, they were influenced as much by the assignment's restrictions in length and aim of discourse as they were by their personal and
academic interests.

Wesley chose to write about birdhouses in part because he had been interested in birdhouses as a child and hoped to pass the interest on to his daughter. At the same time, however, he recognized "birdhouses" as a workable topic for a short, informative paper. He had greatly exceeded the maximum length on the previous graded assignment in the class, the expressive essay; moreover, as a nontypist, he had gotten a friend to type his papers for him, and he felt that presenting her with a long essay to type would be "imposing on her." Thus, he said, "I purposely selected a topic I thought would be rather limited. When I listed the five possible topics in my journal entry, the birdhouse topic was not the one I liked best. But it was the only one I could do justice to in a thousand words."

Similarly Martin, who chose to write about shamanism, expressed at least some personal interest in his topic, stating that when he had first read about shamanism in a World Religion class the previous semester, he had found the concept "interesting in a weird sort of way, so that someone who didn’t know about it might be intrigued." As the last part of the preceding quotation makes clear, however, his choice of topic was also motivated strongly by the nature of the assignment--informing the uninformed reader. He also said of shamanism, "It’s not a deep subject. It’s pretty much cut and dried, what shamans do." Because of the nature of the
assignment, Wesley and Martin both sought topics which would prevent them from writing at length or expressing their own views.

Like Martin, Kari chose to write about a topic she had encountered in another course. A course on American history since 1945 had whetted her interest in the antiwar movement during the Vietnam conflict. "I didn’t know anything about it, and it raises so many moral, philosophical, and political issues," she said. "I’ve really gotten interested." She had gotten so interested, in fact, that she planned to deal with some aspect of the antiwar movement when she wrote her senior thesis, as required of all students wishing to graduate from the University with departmental honors. Thus, she decided to use Ms. Harris’s assignment as a sort of pilot study for her prospective senior thesis.¹

Kari realized that such a broad topic would have to be narrowed drastically to be appropriate for a short paper. She eventually narrowed her topic to the subject of a videotaped documentary she had borrowed from her former history professor: antiwar activities on the campus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Then she further narrowed her focus to the years prior to 1968—that is, the years prior to the most widely publicized antiwar activities. Kari’s topic selection process supports the widely held view that highly competent students seek narrowly focused topics.
Conversely, Zachary’s topic selection process supports the widely held view that less competent students seek broad topics, thus almost assuring that they will treat their topics superficially. Although his first choice for a topic was "something about electric guitars," Zachary rejected this kind of topic because Ms. Harris had told the students to avoid topics about which they were already experts. Instead, he said, he would write on "something about media and its effect on the home." Although Ms. Harris tried to get Zachary to narrow his topic during in-class conferences, often suggesting specific television series or specific social traits for use as focal points, during interviews he never got more specific than "Is television causing society to change, is society causing television to change, or is it a combination of the two?"

After choosing their topics, the students had relatively few remaining choices regarding task representation. Except for being asked to envision an audience other than teacher-as-examiner, they were required to define their research papers as Schwegler and Shamoon say most undergraduates define them: as exercises in assembling and citing other people’s information, not as original contributions to an ongoing discussion within an academic discourse community.

Despite his distaste for informative writing, Martin defined his writing task largely as suppressing any vestiges of personal opinion. When Ms. Harris said to the class that
it was impossible to avoid expressing one’s opinions entirely, since the very act of choosing a topic implied one’s opinion that this topic was worth writing about and reading about. Martin asked several questions and seemed somewhat troubled. Interviewed the next day, he said, "I really don’t have an opinion about shamans. I’m just writing about what they are. I’m not gonna get into why they do it, but just explain what they do, because this is an informative essay." Later, after mentioning that many people claim that such matters as Halloween rituals and superstitions about black cats derive from shamanism, Martin added, "But you sometimes hear of other explanations for Halloween and the fear of black cats. So to keep it strictly informative, not opinionative, I’ll keep that material out. I think that’s probably what she wants." Similarly, Wesley sought to avoid any vestige of persuasion, stating that in the textbook, "Kinneavy clearly calls for a purely informative paper."

Because of the controversial nature of her topic, Kari had to be particularly vigilant in maintaining an objective tone. "I’m supposed to write an unbiased, informative account, but all my sources of information are biased," she observed. She also stated that because her paper would be essentially a narrative, it would be challenging to hold the reader’s interest while avoiding bias. "I don’t want to write just ‘He did this, and then they did that, and then she said this, da-da, da-da,’" she said. "It’ll be hard to make it
interesting and readable without slanting it and getting carried away with the adjectives and adverbs."

As this quotation suggests, Kari found challenge in the notion of working within such strict limits. "I’ve written research papers before, but they were always supposed to have a point, to come to some great conclusion," she said. "I’ve never written a paper that was straight reporting before. So that’s gonna be hard." Still, Kari felt that writing a purely informative account would be helpful preparation, an opportunity to separate fact from propaganda prior to examining the material in more detail and bringing her own views into her senior thesis.

Audience

With the informative aim established and the topics selected, the students were then to define an audience. Because of the nature of referential discourse, the students naturally tended to specify as their audiences people who did not yet know about the material to be discussed in the essays but who might be interested in finding out. As Wesley said, "Ms. Harris asked us to do a journal entry on ‘What are you going to do in this paper to make your readers keep reading?’ I wrote that if my readers get past the title page, where it says ‘Birdhouses,’ they’ll probably read it all." Having become interested in their topics through classes they had recently taken, Martin and Kari in their initial interviews described their audiences as people similar to themselves as
they had been at the start of those classes. Zachary simply said, "General readers."

Wesley took the most dramatic approach to audience of anyone in the entire sample. Recently divorced, he spoke during the interviews with some bitterness about seeing his daughter only three hours a week and not being informed when his daughter took part in a school assembly to which parents were invited. "I'd like to be an involved parent, but I'm not sure I'll be allowed to be one," he said. Asked about the audience for his paper, he stated that he had recently ordered two birdhouses for his daughter and then added,

My audience is my daughter a few years from now, when she's nine or ten. One of the most satisfying and soothing things in my life has been when I could get close to nature, and I'm trying to share that with my daughter because it's been meaningful to me. But my former wife is not that responsive to nature. Now, I'm 43 years old, I eat terribly, I don't exercise, and I chain smoke. We know what that could mean. So I think of this paper as something that may have to speak to my daughter when I cannot.

Wesley's envisioned audience for his expressive essay (about his experiences in Vietnam) and his persuasive essay (about the advantages of majoring in anthropology in college) was also his daughter, although as a teenager rather than a preteen. In fact, he stated that he had already placed his expressive essay in a manila envelope, had written instructions on the envelope suggesting that his daughter read the essay when she turned 18, and had given the envelope to his ex-wife. He added that other than varying the age at which his daughter was to read the essays, he intended to do
the same with the other two essays.

Wesley stated that the concept of writing for his daughter had increased his interest in the assignments. In fact, after Ms. Harris returned the graded copies of his essays, Wesley rewrote them so that he could say all that he wanted to say to his daughter without worrying about a maximum length. In the case of the referential paper, he added material about wrens and robins because he had bought a wrenhouse and a robin roost for his daughter. He added that the reason he had not yet placed the referential essay and the persuasive essay in manila envelopes was that he had not yet completed revisions for his daughter.

Nevertheless, Wesley stated, "I always think of a larger audience too." He had been pleased when certain classmates found his Vietnam paper interesting during peer editing, he hoped his referential paper would appeal to anyone interested in birdhouses, and he acknowledged that his persuasion paper could be appropriate for any college student.

Besides the wider audiences mentioned in the previous paragraph, the students were acutely aware of a more specific audience: Ms. Harris. Zachary stated that he had decided against writing his paper about electric guitars in part because he was convinced that Ms. Harris could not understand such a paper. "I could write it to an audience of guitarists, but still, she's not gonna know what I'm talking about," he said.
While Zachary refused to write for a hypothetical audience which would know things Ms. Harris did not know, Martin feared that Ms. Harris would know things that his hypothetical audience did not know. "I know she already knows something about shamans, but I don’t know how much," he said. "If she already knows more than I do, then my paper may be too broad for her. In that case, she’d want me to delve into things like the influence of shamanism on Halloween."

Zachary’s and Martin’s comments exemplify a complication students face when the assignment asks them to write for a hypothetical audience: no matter what the hypothetical audience, the teacher almost invariably remains the sole grader. Zachary assumed that Ms. Harris might judge unfavorably an informative essay she could not understand, even if a hypothetical audience could understand it. Martin, apparently unaware that any teacher who has given essay exams has read many essays "informing" her of what she already knows, feared that his essay would be judged unfavorably if it did not inform Ms. Harris, regardless of whether or not it could inform a hypothetical audience.

The two students’ concerns are legitimate. As Peter Elbow has noted, even when the audience is supposedly the so-called "general reader," that reader usually turns out to read like "guess who?-the teacher" (222). As will be discussed later in this chapter, the students’ revisions after they saw Ms. Harris’s comments on their rough drafts demonstrate that
to them, the real audience remained primarily what it is in almost all student writing: teacher-as-grader.

Martin, particularly, was concerned with the effects of the teacher's preferences on his own writing. While I ended each student's final interview with an invitation to the student to add anything he or she wished to get on record, Martin asked to add something after I had run out of questions during our first interview--the only time during the entire study when a student asked to extend an interview. And what he added, greatly shortened, was this:

I wish English teachers would have wider tastes in what's a good style. It seems as if they all want you to conform to their tastes, rather than leaving you free to write in your own style. On the rough draft of my expressive essay, she wrote beside one section, "This is boring. Cut it out." So I did. And I'm sure her comment was helpful as far as my grade goes. But it makes me think, am I writing just to please this English teacher? And the answer is yes, I am, because she gives the grade. But I like to write in a certain way--I can't define the way, it just comes natural. But she may like a different style, so for this class, when I write I will have only her in mind, as far as reader and audience goes. Not myself and not my classmates.

Martin never showed me the rough draft of his previous essay with Ms. Harris's written comments, so I cannot confirm or deny that she wrote "This is boring. Cut it out" on the draft. On the rough drafts I received of the students' referential essays, none of her comments carried such a peremptory tone. Perhaps it is in Martin's nature to turn a teacher's question or suggestion into a command: more than anyone else in the entire sample, he seemed bent on
determining precisely what the teacher wanted, down to the minutest details, making comments such as "After I got the first paper back, I realized that she likes descriptive adjectives that are not commonly used." While Martin argued that English teachers had stolen his freedom of self-expression, one could argue that Martin had willingly sacrificed this freedom in his quest for higher grades.

In an article about responding to student texts, Donald Murray asserts that when students ask, "What do you want?", the teacher should be able to reply honestly, "Surprise me" (152). It is impossible to know whether Martin would respond to such a teacher with delight, with panic, or with both; in any case, one could wish that Martin had encountered a few such teachers.

Murray’s nondirective approach may be incompatible with the specific goals established by Kinneavy’s aims of discourse and by the research-paper assignment itself. More importantly, Martin is far from alone in his attitudes. In the two other largest qualitative studies of students completing research papers, Carol Kuhlthau repeatedly portrays students as willing to compromise their own views and interests to please the teacher (152, 210, 389), and Loretta Haskell throughout portrays students as motivated almost exclusively by grades rather than by a desire to learn. Moreover, others among the four students discussed in this chapter seemed to feel pressure to write whatever would please
Ms. Harris, regardless of their own preferences, especially after they had received Ms. Harris’s written comments on their rough drafts.

In their methods of gathering, receiving and organizing information, the students once again reacted to the limits imposed by the assignment. I turn now, then, to those methods.

Gathering, Receiving, and Organizing Information

When interviewed, Ms. Harris said of the processes of students in general in the 300-level composition course, "They just won’t go into the library. It scares them. So many of them use just convenient sources, and those 'instant research materials' just aren’t very good." In fact, libraries in general and the University’s library in particular played surprisingly unimportant roles in the four students’ search processes. Nevertheless, the research materials the students found seemed largely appropriate for their purposes. In most cases, their approach to sources seemed motivated not by fear of the library but by the nature of the assignment, by the fact that Ms. Harris herself had encouraged the class to consider using nontraditional sources, and by the fact that as relatively experienced students, they had accumulated a network of information from previous academic and personal experiences.

Martin did not even attempt to find library sources. He still had some textbooks from the World Religions class in
which he had first learned about shamanism, and two of these books turned out to be useful. He also borrowed some books from a friend of his father’s, eventually citing one of the borrowed books, again a college textbook, in his paper. Martin stated that because of the paper’s informative aim and required brevity, the textbooks were ideal sources, since they were themselves written with the goal of informing readers clearly and concisely. Although he stated that the textbooks provided more information than he would need for the paper, Martin also interviewed a minister he knew who had worked in Haiti, where the shaman tradition remains powerful.

Like Martin, Wesley did not use the University’s library, assuming that this library would not contain any books about birdhouses. (In fact, although the University library contained no books devoted exclusively to birdhouses, it contained many books about birds, books containing far more information about birdhouses than Wesley could have used in his paper.) Instead, he found three books about birdhouses in the public library, two of which he eventually cited in the paper. He also received from a nearby nature center several handouts about birdhouses, one of which he cited in the paper. In addition, when the birdhouses he had ordered for his daughter arrived, Wesley found that the instructional booklets the company enclosed with the birdhouses made "excellent little resources." His paper cites both booklets. Again like Martin, Wesley attempted to supplement print material with
interviews, seeking to interview a bird expert at the nature center. Unfortunately, the expert was too busy to be interviewed on the day when Walter could interview him.

Also like Martin, Zachary relied to some extent on borrowing textbooks—in this case, from a friend majoring in communications. He also stated that he later got "one or two" books from the university’s library.

Although Kari was the only one of the four to begin her search by finding books in the University’s library system, she later stated that she never did read any of the books she found. Instead, seeking a way to narrow her topic from the unwieldy "antiwar movements during the Vietnam conflict," she talked to her teacher from the American history class. That teacher loaned her a few of his books and a videotape of a PBS documentary about the antiwar movement at the University of Wisconsin. Kari eventually used the documentary as her paper’s most important source. She also described one of the teacher’s books as a "very informative source." Finally, Kari was the only one of the four students to search for periodicals. Using the Reader’s Guide, she located an article focusing on events on the Wisconsin campus.

During interviews, the students all seemed to be relatively sophisticated in their methods of using efficiently the sources they had found.

With the exception of Zachary, the students clearly described the kinds of sources they sought and the uses to
which they would put those sources. As already mentioned, Martin sought textbook information because of its appropriateness for the assignment. Wesley expressed particular interest in tables summarizing the straightforward information needed for his essentially "how-to" approach. Kari stated that she would use the film and the magazine article for specific material about the situation at the University of Wisconsin while using material from one of the books for "generalizations and to establish a feel for the times."

The students also knew how to find the relevant sections of a book. Zachary said that he read the introductions to his books, seeking "an overview of what they were gonna talk about." He then used indexes and chapter headings to find the sections that seemed likeliest to yield helpful material. Finally, he said, he quickly thumbed through the remaining pages "to see if I’d missed anything." (His completed research paper, however, provides evidence that he may not have used this approach.) During his first interview, Martin stated that he had already found "the special sections that might help" from each of his books. Wesley said that although his books did not have indexes, it was easy to find the relevant sections of each.

Showing rhetorical awareness, the students evaluated their sources for reliability as well as usefulness. Kari, as already mentioned, was always acutely aware of the biases
inherent in most material about the Vietnam conflict. Although she believed that the film which was her most important source was largely fair and unbiased, she recognized that the film had achieved its unbiased tone through interviews with and footage from the actions of people representing a wide range of perspectives, pro-war and antiwar. In Bakhtinian terms, she saw the filmmakers as having done precisely what she would need to do in her paper: bring contesting voices together in an evenhanded fashion. Even with the noncontroversial topic of birdhouses, Wesley approached his sources rhetorically. Of a book called *Making Fancy Birdhouses and Feeders*, he said, "This is for people who like woodworking projects and want cute little things around the house rather than for bird-trackers. It's largely useless for someone interested in birds." He also noted that even in the informational tables he sought, his sources did not all agree about certain details, such as the height at which the birdhouse should be mounted.

Martin at times seemed to regard his sources more uncritically: during the class discussion of whether or not opinion could be avoided in the essay, he said, "I'm probably just adopting the opinions of my sources, because I don't know anything else about my subject besides what they say." At other times, as already mentioned, he seemed convinced that he could avoid opinions altogether while relying on material from his sources. But he did know when his sources offered views
which others might not accept, as in his already-discussed decision to avoid using material about Halloween and black cats.

In organizing their information, none of the four students used note cards, and only two used notes at all. Both Martin and Wesley stated that they took no notes from their sources. Walter merely marked key pages with bookmarks, while Martin wrote out bibliographic entries and numbered them for ease of citation in his first draft. Both stated that they wrote their first drafts with the sources spread out nearby for consultation when needed. As mentioned in previous chapters, some research describes this method as typical of less competent students (Kennedy 443); nevertheless, Martin and Wesley both seemed quite competent, and both received high grades on their papers. Both also described their procedure as standard for them on short papers, while acknowledging that this approach probably would not work for longer, more elaborate papers, thus providing some support for Ford, Rees, and Ward’s view that long, elaborate research papers require a different set of competencies than do shorter, simpler research papers.

Zachary and Kari both said that they took notes for the paper, using notebook pages. However, Zachary’s actual paper provides evidence that he may not have taken any notes. Because her most important source was a film rather than a print source which she could reread, Kari needed fairly
extensive notes. She stated that she took seven pages of notes on the film and the magazine article combined, viewing the film three times and relying heavily on the pause button on her VCR.

Although I simply forgot to ask Kari about note cards, the other three students all stated that they did not ordinarily use note cards. "I tend to lose them," Zachary said. Wesley, who said he had never used note cards, added that one reason he had repeatedly dropped courses rather than writing a long paper was his conviction that long papers require the use of note cards. Martin said of using note cards, "For some people it may work wonderfully, but to me it's useless." He also said that when required to turn in note cards along with research papers in freshman composition, he had written the paper first, then afterwards had made note cards by copying onto cards the quotations and paraphrases he had already used in the paper.

Martin said that as with note cards, so with outlines: he wrote them only when required to, and even then did so only after he had completed the paper. Kari, with her "Look what I did!" approach to writing, also had no use for outlines. Zachary, however, stated that he wrote a rough outline for his first draft, listing his three main points.

Wesley’s experience with outlining the paper was more complex. He stated that just before writing his first draft, he attempted to organize his thoughts into an outline. Then
he stated, "But as I proceeded, I found myself writing full sentences, and I realized I was in effect writing a rough draft already. So I abandoned the outline without completing it and started writing the paper. I’ve had this problem with outlines before."

The same tendency toward copia that caused Wesley to turn his outline into a rough draft eventually led him back to outlining. He stated that when he had written about 525 words of his draft, he realized that he would need considerable self-discipline to stay within the 1000-word limit. Thus, he wrote a quick, rough outline of the points he still wanted to cover and used that outline as a measure of how many words he could devote to each of his remaining points.

Finally, it should be noted that in early interviews, Martin and Wesley both described the projected organization of their papers in some detail and that the organization of their completed papers closely resembles the organization they described in those early interviews. But Martin did not write an outline at all, and Wesley had not written one at the time that he described his paper’s projected organization. Stotsky’s points about the importance of writing in the planning process notwithstanding, the absence of written plans does not necessarily indicate an absence of mental plans, at least for short research papers.

Another of Stotsky’s views—that in research-based writing, the search process is largely separate from and prior
to the writing of the first draft—held true for these students. Their research processes, which this chapter has just examined, largely preceded their first-draft processes, which this chapter will now examine.

First Drafts

Like most of the students discussed in Chapter Five, Zachary and Wesley described themselves as procrastinators. Of the two, however, Wesley was far more adept at handling his procrastination in constructive ways.

Zachary stated that, in high school, he had always assumed he could do reasonably well on essays for English class even if he put them off until the last minute, whereas preparing for tests in other classes required more time. Similarly, when his rough draft for Ms. Harris fell due on the same day that he had a test in a statistics class, he concentrated on preparing for the test. "Ever since high school, I’ve known which classes I could blow off until the last minute and which ones I couldn’t," he said. "I’ve always seen English as something where I could throw something together at the last minute, and the teacher will be semi-happy with it."

Zachary missed the rough draft deadline, and even the draft he turned in late was written under rushed conditions. He stated, "I wrote it at around two in the morning, then got up at eight and typed it into the computer up at school."
Wesley stated that when he was younger, his procrastination had resulted in his earning bad grades. However, he stated that over the years he had become "very adept at knowing exactly how long it takes to complete a given project. So I put the project off until I can’t put it off any longer, as a way of limiting how much time I spend on anything." He estimated that this rough draft would require about three hours to write. The draft was due on a Thursday, and Wesley’s typist said that Tuesday would be more convenient than Wednesday for typing the draft. Wesley began writing the draft on a Monday afternoon and gave the completed draft to his friend on Monday evening, having taken almost exactly three hours to write it, not counting breaks.

Kari and Zachary both wrote their rough drafts in a single session. Martin wrote his over a period of a week, rereading enough of his completed work to reorient himself before each new session. He stated that he preferred completing short papers in a single session but that his crowded schedule had made such a writing process impossible on this assignment. Similarly, despite his preference for writing papers "in one fell swoop," Wesley completed his first draft in three sessions, albeit in a single afternoon and evening.

Kari and Martin both wrote their first drafts on word processors, Martin writing his in his apartment and Kari writing hers in the University’s writing center. Martin
stated that he always writes first drafts on the word processor, both to revise more easily and to avoid duplicating effort. Kari had never before attempted to write a first draft on a word processor, but she stated that she had liked composing that way and would probably do so in the future. Zachary and Martin wrote their first drafts longhand.

In terms of conditions while they wrote, Martin, Zachary, and Kari all seemed willing to adapt to necessity. Both Martin and Zachary said that it made no difference to them whether or not background noises such as television were present while they wrote. Martin also said that while he preferred writing at night, the fact that his schedule had forced him to write parts of this assignment in the afternoon had caused him no difficulties. Similarly, Kari stated that although the writing lab’s hours had forced her to complete her rough draft rather rapidly, the "straight reporting" nature of her draft had made the rapid pace easy to maintain.

Wesley seemed slightly more particular about conditions for writing, stating that he preferred some background noise and activity, but not too much. Accordingly, he began writing his draft in a Godfather’s Pizza during the relatively slow mid-afternoon hours, continued working on it in the University’s library, and finished it at his mother’s apartment while his mother watched television.

Only Wesley and Martin made their first drafts available for this study. Wesley’s handwritten draft suggests that he
revises very little as he writes. Although his draft, equivalent in length to about 4 1/2 typed pages, contains 22 crossouts or marginal additions, all but one of these are at the punctuation or word-substitution level, and the remaining change is at the phrase level. Wesley’s journal entries and in-class writing exercises reveal a similar absence of revisions beyond the word-substitution level.

Because he composed on a word processor, Martin produced a rough draft with no crossouts or marginal additions as evidence of revising. However, after the first of his several sessions in producing the first draft, he printed out a copy of the three paragraphs he had written thus far. When this three-paragraph fragment is compared with the draft Martin brought to class for peer editing, one gets the impression that Martin revised his draft-in-progress much more extensively than Wesley revised his. True, the eight-sentence opening paragraph of the three-paragraph fragment remains unchanged as the opening paragraph of Martin’s complete draft; but two of the five sentences in the second paragraph have been reworded, and four new sentences have been added to that paragraph sometime between the first printout and the complete draft. Moreover, three new paragraphs have been added after the second paragraph, so that the third paragraph of the three-paragraph fragment has become the sixth paragraph of the complete draft. Only one of the five sentences in the earlier version of that paragraph remains unchanged; three have been
rewarded, and one has been deleted in favor of two new sentences which take the idea from the deleted sentence considerably further.

After completing their rough drafts, the students received feedback from their peers and from Ms. Harris. This chapter now examines the nature of that feedback and the students' reactions to that feedback.

**Peer Responses**

Although almost half of the students in the class were absent on the day that rough drafts were due for peer editing, all four students discussed in this chapter were present for at least part of the period. Martin missed the first few minutes and Kari did not arrive until more than halfway through the period, but both had rough drafts. Zachary, in contrast, was present when class began but did not have a rough draft and was therefore required to leave when peer editing began.

Wesley and Martin later provided me with copies of the responses their drafts received during peer editing—two for each paper. All four responses included four or five comments pointing out problems at the word, phrase, or sentence level. Three of the four included brief summary comments, ranging from four to thirty-one words in length, praising the paper as a whole, and one of the three also included a comment praising a specific segment of the paper. Some of the peer editors had also written proofreading corrections on the drafts
themselves, although no draft contained more than five such markings.

Despite his emphatic assertion that he was writing purely to please the teacher, Martin displayed some concern with the comments he would receive from his peers. He stated that prior to bringing in his draft he had shown it to a roommate "to see if anything’s unclear," after which he had proofread the paper. "If they’re gonna give me comments, I want it to be substantial, not things like 'You spelled foreign wrong,'" he said.

Wesley, in contrast, preferred to receive extremely specific suggestions from his peers. He had been irritated, earlier in the semester, when a classmate had responded to his expressive essay by writing, "This is boring until you get to the part about the Vietnam war"—with no suggestions for how to improve the "boring" section. He had dismissed another classmate’s response to the same paper as "just being nice. All he wrote was something like 'Gee, this is a good paper.'" After peer editing of his paper about birdhouses, Wesley was pleased that most of his classmates’ comments had been extremely specific and that he had learned something: that "all right" was two words.

Several factors may have contributed to Wesley’s uneasiness with receiving large-scale responses from his peers. One was his generally low regard for his fellow undergraduates. During his final interview he said:
I always get the impression they want me to write down to their level. I write long, rather involved sentences, and they seem to have trouble with that at times, but the audience I have in mind wouldn't have trouble with that. And on my persuasive paper, they saw some of my examples as not being examples at all, but as being my main points. But when Professor Harris read the paper, she wasn't confused in the least about what my main points were. So at times I get a little suspicious that peer editing is a pooling of ignorance. Sometimes I don't think my peers are all that smart.

Another cause for Wesley's attitude toward peer editing was his reluctance to revise. "Before this course, I don't think I'd ever done more than one draft of any paper for school," he said. This statement becomes rather remarkable when one considers that Wesley had attended college, off and on, for over 25 years prior to taking the course. He also stated that because his friend typed his papers for him, thus forcing him to write between lines, in margins, and on separate pages marked "Insert #1" and so forth, extensive revision was extremely inconvenient for him.

Finally, Wesley's attitude was partly a result of his somewhat thin-skinned nature. Of his peers' comments on his expressive essay, he said, "Although I was offended at the time, I decided there was some merit in these upstarts' suggestions." As will be discussed later, Wesley was also offended by some of Ms. Harris's comments on his rough drafts.

Nevertheless, Wesley responded relatively favorably to his peers' comments on the birdhouse paper and stated that he followed most of their suggestions, although each suggestion admittedly involved changing no more than a word or phrase.
Because his purpose was to explain information to an audience he defined as his daughter when she would be ten years old, Wesley had no difficulty accepting suggestions to simplify and clarify information in this paper. In addition, what Wesley called the "cut and dried" nature of his topic encouraged his peers to respond to specific wordings rather than to concepts, while simultaneously preventing Wesley from taking criticism of his paper personally.

The Teacher’s Responses

This was the first semester that Ms. Harris had collected and written comments on her students’ rough drafts. When interviewed, she stated that she had adopted this procedure because

Last term, after peer editing, some of my students would bring their drafts to me for suggestions, and those students tended to do better on the final copy than other students did. And it was not just that they slavishly followed my directions and did nothing else. They went beyond what I said and improved the paper in other ways, which I found to be encouraging. I taught high school for a long time, and when you give a suggestion to high school kids, they do exactly what you say but never go beyond that. I’m glad college students, or at least Advanced Comp students, aren’t like that.

The behavior of the students discussed in this chapter, however, establishes that at least some Advanced Composition students are "like that." Of 27 suggestions or corrections Ms. Harris wrote on Martin’s draft, Martin made changes to accommodate 24 in his final draft. The other three involved only single words or punctuation; when interviewed, Martin indicated that the only reason he had not responded to these
three was that he had not understood what Ms. Harris had wanted. In contrast, of the ten suggestions made by Martin’s peer editors, only three correspond to changes Martin made on the final copy—and in those three cases, Ms. Harris also made the same suggestion that one of the peers did. In one case in which both peers made exactly the same suggestion but Ms. Harris made no suggestion, Martin left his wording unchanged. In fact, other than responding to Ms. Harris’s suggestions and corrections, Martin made no changes whatsoever between rough draft and final copy.²

When interviewed, Martin said that after receiving his draft with Ms. Harris’s comments, he put "maybe a half hour" into revising the paper into its final form. Most of that time, he stated, was devoted to the conclusion, since Ms. Harris had described the conclusion to his rough draft as "a bit planted" and had suggested a different approach. Martin ended up deleting his final six sentences and adding one sentence—by far the most sweeping change he made between draft and final copy. "Even though I only added one sentence at the end, that sentence took a lot of thinking," he said. "That conclusion is the only part I’m a little apprehensive about. She hasn’t seen that last sentence before, and I’m not sure she’ll like it."

Some insight into Martin’s revision strategy may be gained by examining his response to Ms. Harris’s warning against plagiarism. Ms. Harris had bracketed one of Martin’s
sentences and had written beside it, "Some of these words don't sound much like yours. Double check source for accuracy." Although Martin stated during an interview that he did not regard the sentence as containing plagiarism, the sentence in his final copy contains quotation marks around "religious functionaries" and "heredity, choice, or apprenticeship," phrases which appeared in a sentence from page 42 of his source, a book by Robert Ellwood. But later in the same paragraph of Martin's rough draft appears this sentence, with no quotation marks:

--He must either serve them or face an unspeakable punishment in mind and body (Ellwood 42-43).

Ellwood's page 43 contains this sentence, punctuated as in the original:

--He must either serve them, or face the unspeakable terrors of their punishment in mind and body.

Ms. Harris had not marked Martin's "unspeakable punishment" sentence with a suggestion to check the source. The sentence contains no quotation marks in Martin's final copy.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of Martin's revision strategy was his response to Ms. Harris's written comment about his citations. Martin's nine-paragraph rough draft contains ten citations, with one main source cited seven times and three less-used sources cited once apiece. One paragraph contains two different citations, both citing the same source, while each other paragraph contains one citation. Ms. Harris suggested that Martin "interweave" his sources more and avoid
overreliance on a single source. In a narrow sense, Martin followed Ms. Harris’s advice: in the final copy, one of the less-used sources is cited three times more than in the draft, and another of the less-used sources is cited a second time. Moreover, while none of the nine paragraphs in the rough draft contains citations of more than one source, five of the nine paragraphs in the final copy contain citations of two different sources. Unfortunately, in every case in which a citation of a less-used source has been added, no new material has been added to the paper. In every paragraph in which a citation of a less-used source has been added, the sentences from the beginning of the paragraph through the citation are unchanged from the draft or else have been altered by only a single word. Thus, while the final copy appears to rely less on a single source and appears to "interweave" sources more, Ms. Harris’s probable intent—that Martin should rethink his paper’s structure and his approach to his sources—has been ignored. As William G. Perry, Jr., observes in his well-known study of college students’ mental development, "... where independence of mind is demanded by authority, its forms can be mastered and ‘handed in’ while the spirit remains obediently conformist" (36).

Explaining his handling of citations, Martin said:

All my sources said pretty much the same thing, but one said it better than the others, so that was the one I kept citing in my draft. But I didn’t tell her that. Instead, I found places where another book said the same thing, and I added a citation or else switched the citation from one book to another.
In reality, Martin only sometimes found places where other books said the same thing: in two of the four cases in which he added citations from less-cited sources, the cited pages from the sources do not contain any information found in Martin’s sentences immediately preceding the citations. In any case, given Martin’s view of English teachers, his response to Ms. Harris’s rough-draft comments is not surprising.

One might expect a far different approach to revision from Wesley. He had stated that on the expressive essay, not only had he not made certain changes suggested by Ms. Harris, but he had written a journal entry which stated, in essence, "You wanted me to change this, and I didn’t." But on the birdhouse paper, Wesley followed 19 out of Ms. Harris’s 20 written suggestions or corrections on the rough draft. Wesley’s final copy also contains no changes corresponding to suggestions made by peers but not made by Ms. Harris. However, seven of the eight suggestions from Wesley’s peers correspond to suggestions made by Ms. Harris (a much higher rate of overlap, according to Wesley, than on either his expressive or his persuasive essay), and the way Wesley made certain changes, as well as his comments during interviews, suggest that he was influenced by his peers in at least a few of his rewordings. Wesley’s final copy contains only three changes not traceable to Ms. Harris’s comments on the rough draft; all three are at the single-word-substitution level.
Throughout the process, Wesley seemed cynical in his handling of the feedback his paper received. Interviewed after completing the rough draft, he stated that the draft suffered from two major problems: overreliance on one source and, because of his struggle with the 1000-word limit (his draft was 1070 words), less detail in the latter part of the paper than in the earlier part. He added, "Frankly, if those things aren’t pointed out to me as problems, I’m not gonna correct them. I’ll rewrite the paper for my daughter eventually, but I won’t rewrite it now just so I can feel that I produced the best possible paper." After peer editing, he stated that although he had made certain wording changes suggested by his peers, if Ms. Harris’s comments on the draft indicated that it was already in her view an "A" paper, he would undo those changes and hand in the final copy unaltered. After he had turned in his final copy, with the two major problems from the draft left unaltered, he said:

I disagreed with some of Dr. [sic] Harris’s comments on my draft, but I followed her suggestions anyway, even though in some cases I thought the changes made the paper worse. None of the changes got in the way of my communicating the facts, which was the goal of the paper. But also, I was responding to the realities of the grading system.

Although Kari did not provide me with copies of her rough draft and final draft, some of her comments during the interviews suggested that she, too, had revised with the mindset, "Change what the teacher tells you to, and leave everything else alone." She stated that her peers and Ms.
Harris alike had stressed the need for her to elaborate on her rough draft by adding more detail. Accordingly, she returned to her notes and found material to add to the final draft. After Ms. Harris returned the graded papers, Kari described being "rather surprised" by some of the comments her paper received:

On the draft she had written in certain places that I should elaborate. Then when I elaborated in those places, on the final copy she'd have something like, "Why did you put that in?" Maybe I hadn't done it along the lines she intended, but I thought I was doing what she requested. And in other places where she hadn't written anything on the draft, she'd write "Why this?", even though I hadn't changed it. I thought, "You didn't say anything before."

For most composition specialists, the students' responses to Ms. Harris's comments must seem disheartening. Surely one of the central concepts behind the dramatic changes in composition during the past 25 years has been that teachers should stress the writing process, not simply the finished product. This means that teachers should learn to intervene beneficially in their students' writing processes—including their revising processes. However, articles about revision consistently stress that the teacher should help the student find what the student wants to say, rather than imposing the teacher's will on the student's essay. Why, then, did the students discussed in this chapter largely react to Ms. Harris's comments on their draft as if they had received a set of instructions for teacher-pleasing?
One reason may have been the time frame. Because of an unusually busy schedule resulting largely from her dissertation and her husband's running for political office, Ms. Harris did not return the rough drafts with her comments until almost three weeks after she received the drafts. By that time spring break had come and gone, and class members were well into their work on the next essay, the persuasion paper. After receiving the rough drafts with Ms. Harris's comments, the students had only until the next class meeting, two days later, to prepare their final drafts. Perhaps the students simply lacked the time to do more than work Ms. Harris's suggestions into their texts.

But what about the nearly three weeks between handing in their drafts to Ms. Harris and receiving those drafts back? Although all three students had copies of their papers, none made any changes during that time other than Wesley's few word-level and phrase-level changes. Those who were interviewed during that period said, in essence, "I'm just waiting to see what she'll say." Given this attitude, it seems possible that Ms. Harris's practice of responding to her students' drafts may have actually reduced the extent of their revision—or at least reduced the extent that they revised on their own.

Another factor may have been the nature of Ms. Harris's responses to the drafts. She often circled misspelled words and corrected punctuation errors, thus perhaps associating at
least some of her markings with relatively clear correct/incorrect distinctions rather than with matters of interpretation. In a few cases—although very rarely, not more than once or twice per paper—she crossed out a few of the student’s words and replaced them with her own words, more or less imposing her own preferences. Her suggestions even extended to fine stylistic distinctions, as when she wrote "such as" over Wesley’s "e.g."

In her commenting style, Ms. Harris may have been influenced by her knowledge that she was taking part in my study. When interviewed, she stated that my study had not affected her behavior in class because once she got to know me she realized "I didn’t have to impress your socks off."

However, she then added:

Maybe I was a little more detailed in my comments on the papers because I knew you’d be looking at the papers. I remember a few years ago, when Connors and Lunsford sent out that form asking for papers to look at, I was more careful to be thorough in my comments on the papers I knew I’d be sending them. But I doubt that I changed much for you; it’s not like I was thinking, "Oh, if I miss a comma splice, he’ll see it and wonder why I didn’t mark it." And as you probably noticed, I don’t mark all the errors on papers anyway.

In an earlier interview, Wesley noted that Ms. Harris commented more on the rough draft of his birdhouse essay than she had on the rough draft of his previous essay. "She was really picky," he added. "In my journal, I told her that very few people take kindly to criticism, especially of things they do well. And I think I write well." Nevertheless, as already
mentioned, Walter incorporated all but one of Ms. Harris's suggestions into the final copy of his paper.

Overall, however, Ms. Harris's comments on the rough drafts should not in themselves have elicited the do-what-teacher-wants responses they received. True, she wrote an average of twenty marginal or in-text markings per paper calling attention to errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or citation format or to specific wording problems. However, she also averaged seven marginal or in-text comments per paper either praising effective ideas and wordings or requesting more information, and her longer, summary comments at the ends of the drafts focus on large-scale matters such as limiting the topic, staying objective, and keeping within the informative aim. Moreover, despite the few cases of crossing out students' words and replacing them with her own, for the most part Ms. Harris went out of her way to avoid a dictatorial tone, both by using "hedging" words ("Maybe a bit stiff"—underlinings mine) and by relying on questions whenever possible—"Should you say something about desirable birds?", for example. (A page of Martin's rough draft, with Ms. Harris's comments, is reproduced as Appendix I, page 689.) Perhaps most significant of all, after Wesley not only did not follow all of Ms. Harris's suggestions for revision of his expressive essay but also wrote a journal entry informing her of his decision not to follow a particular suggestion, his expressive essay still received an "A" from Ms. Harris. "She
grants us the right to disagree with her," Wesley observed.

In defense of Martin's and Wesley's strategies for revision after they had received Ms. Harris's comments, one could argue that their papers did not need extensive revision beyond that suggested by Ms. Harris. In her evaluative comments at the ends of Martin's and Wesley's drafts, Ms. Harris made clear that she thought the papers were already fairly good, thus perhaps discouraging Martin and Wesley from revising extensively beyond her suggestions. Also, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Martin had apparently revised his paper fairly extensively prior to turning in the rough draft. He may have already reached the point where he felt satisfied with the paper.

Another factor of interest was revision-related habits and attitudes the students had formed long before the course began. Martin said that even in English classes in which the teacher did not collect and comment on rough drafts, he always showed his rough draft to the teacher and asked for suggestions. "Like I said, my attitude toward English teachers--you've got to give them what they want," he said. In contrast, as already mentioned, Wesley said that he had never before written more than one draft of a paper for class. Perhaps by responding to his peers' comments and Ms. Harris's comments, however half-heartedly, Wesley was taking a crucial first step toward forming the habit of revising on his own.
At least in Wesley’s case, the nature of the assignment strongly affected responses to Ms. Harris’s suggestions. Wesley stated that because he had felt less "investment" in the referential essay than in either the expressive essay or the persuasive essay, he had felt less incentive to insist on his own approach and more willing to make whatever changes were necessary to placate the teacher. Besides his lukewarm attitude toward the informative aim, he also felt less than challenged by the modest length requirements for the paper. When asked at the end of his final interview if there was anything else he wanted to get on the record, he again mentioned having made certain changes despite believing that they made the paper worse, and then added:

Writing assignments should be meaningful, and to me, that means they should be long. I ended up over the maximum length for this paper, even though I wasn’t exploring a very thought-provoking topic. I think a research paper should be 10 or 15 pages. A short paper like this one does some good as a training exercise, giving information on how to cite, handle quotations, and so forth. But you’re short-changing students if you make the paper too short because the student doesn’t get the chance to dig up more information and really learn something. The best thing in research papers is when you, the writer, learn more. For me to feel investment in the paper, I’d need to be digging up information for me as well as for my reader. Otherwise it’s just a matter of giving the teacher what the teacher wants.

Granted, Wesley’s statement is somewhat undermined by the fact that he had repeatedly dropped classes rather than attempt longer research papers. Nevertheless, Wesley clearly had not felt challenged by the assignment, and in the expressive essay and the persuasive essay, he had shown more independence in
his approach to revision.

Finally, the grading system itself played an extremely important role in shaping the students' responses to Ms. Harris's comments. When discussing his modest plans for revising the essay, Wesley said, "I'd love to become a professional writer, but that's just not in the cards. So to me, finally, the point of this course is to get a grade."

Martin's grade-centered motivation in responding to English teachers' preferences has been clear throughout this chapter. As already discussed, other qualitative studies of students' research-paper processes have stressed students' willingness to compromise their own ideas in favor of their teachers' ideas. Thus, teachers' attempts to intervene beneficially in students' writing processes may be viewed by those students as somewhat threatening, as when students in Kuhlthau's study reacted to offers of individual conferences with the suspicion that the conferences were covert tests to see how much progress they had made on their assignments up to that point (206). In Bakhtinian terms, the grading system greatly amplifies the teacher's "voice" in student texts, so that a comment such as "Perhaps a bit overstated" may sound to the student like "You'd better tone this section down or I'll make you regret it!" Under such circumstances, in spite of the teacher's best intentions, the teacher becomes not a helpful advisor but rather a boss dictating, with the student in the role of stenographer.
It does not necessarily follow, however, that the grading system should be abolished. If no other motivation could be found to fill the vacuum, then abolition of the grading system might merely turn students like Martin into students like Zachary.

Zachary, in fact, revised in a far different way from the other three students. His approach probably resulted in part from the reception his past-deadline rough draft received from Ms. Harris. While most of her markings on the text itself were again corrections of errors in mechanics or else suggestions for stylistic rewordings, Ms. Harris wrote far more suggestions related to reworking the essay's ideas on Zachary's draft than on Martin's, Wesley's, or, in all probability, Kari's. The evaluative comment at the end emphasizes that the paper is far too broad, suggesting that the final copy "Take one of your points--perhaps the first--and expand it. You could probably write a whole paper on talk shows alone!" Similarly, one of the in-text comments reads, "This is an interesting point and might be a good basis for the whole paper." While Ms. Harris was being as tactful as possible, the message was clear, with or without amplification from the grading system: Zachary needed to narrow his focus in revision. Thus, Zachary cannot be said to have followed or to have ignored most of Ms. Harris's comments, the ones related to specific wordings in specific sentences, for one simply cannot find those same sentences in the final copy.
A statistical comparison of Zachary's paper to Martin's and Wesley's demonstrates the contrast. In Martin's and Wesley's papers combined, 66 percent of the sentences in the final copies are exactly the same in wording and in sentence order as the sentences in the rough drafts, with 14 percent changed at only the single-word or punctuation level and 5 percent at the phrase level, while 6 percent are more substantial rewordings of sentences from the drafts, and 9 percent are new sentences not found in the drafts. In Zachary's paper, however, no sentences in the final copy resemble in wording any sentences in the rough draft, and only four sentences in the final copy even rely on ideas found in the rough draft. The rough draft and the final copy are essentially two different essays, united only by being about television.

At first, this seems an encouraging contrast to the practices of the other students—a genuine "re-vision," indebted to the teacher only for general guidelines. Unfortunately, extensive revision does not necessarily reflect massive commitment to the writing task. "I really didn't think about the paper from the time I gave her the draft until she handed it back," Zachary said. "I just basically rewrote it the day before it was due. It took about an hour and a half to rewrite." In essence, Zachary apparently did with the final copy what he did with the rough draft: procrastinated until the last minute and then produced a rushed, sloppy text,
consisting largely of whatever television-related thoughts were on his mind at the moment of composition.

Having examined the students' processes of completing the papers, this chapter now examines those completed papers and the grades they received.

Finished Papers, Grades, and Comments

The Papers

Because Kari's paper was unavailable, only the other three students' papers will be described.

Despite his view of informative writing as limiting, Martin begins his paper rather flamboyantly with an incident drawn from his interview with the minister who had worked in Haiti:

Imagine yourself on a crowded street in a foreign city. The street is filled with worshippers and dancers, singing and chanting. A circle of people begins to form, leaving one man in the center. This man announces that he is about to take a journey into the spirit world. In order for the spirits to allow this, he says he must endure great pain. The man drinks from a clear glass and goes into a deep trance. In a moment he breaks the glass with his hand and swallows all of the pieces. The scenes following this are too graphic in nature to describe (Taylor).

After this opening paragraph, however, the paper conforms to the admittedly somewhat colorless, textbook-like approach Martin had consistently described when defining the task. The following paragraph, near the end of the essay, is typical:

The past has obviously been marked by shamanism to a great extent. The "pre-ice age" peoples practiced it avidly as is depicted in their cave drawings of the hunt. Many times, the animals pictures are left without a leg or ear. This was
probably done by a shaman to attempt to make the hunter of animals to be successful, because the animal would be slow or be unable to hear the hunter (Carmody 30-1). Many argue that shamanism is the "prototype" for much of the present world's religion (Ellwood 40).

This paragraph demonstrates most limitations of the paper: occasional lapses of organization, as in the paragraph's sudden shift of focus in the final sentence, a sentence added in response to one of Ms. Harris's comments on the draft; a few awkward wordings, as in the unnecessary "be's" in the paragraph's next-to-last sentence; and two to three errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar per page, as in the lack of an apostrophe in "the animals pictures."

As already discussed, another limitation concerns Martin's difficulties crediting the voices which have contributed to his paper. Three of Martin's 14 parenthetical citations, including two of the four added in response to Ms. Harris's comments about the need to rely on more than one source, name pages which simply do not contain the information Martin used in the sentences preceding the citations. Also, besides the "unspeakable punishments" sentence discussed on page 48, at least four other sentences in Martin's paper also contain wordings resembling those in his sources, without quotation marks. In these four sentences, however, the overlapping wordings are generally phrases like "heredity, choice, or apprenticeship" rather than entire sentences like the one discussed on page 48. Moreover, these sentences represent only a small percentage of the paper: teacher
pleasing to the end, Martin came within 15 words of hitting the 1000-word maximum exactly. The copied phrases have very little effect on the quality of the paper as a whole. In addition, given not only that Martin always parenthetically cited the copied phrases but also that he did not view himself as having plagiarized in the sentence in which he had copied "religious functionaries" and "heredity, choice, or apprenticeship" without quotation marks, such minor plagiarism as may exist in the paper is surely unintentional.

While Martin’s paper may be imperfect, its defects are far less severe than those found in most of the papers discussed in the previous three chapters. As the two paragraphs quoted above demonstrate, on the whole Martin has produced a paper featuring clear information about an unusual, lively topic.

Wesley’s greatest success may be in establishing a persona with an insider’s knowledge:

One should be wary of commercial birdhouses, especially those in general purpose catalogues. ... These birds are searching for something close to their natural nesting sites, not for scale models of human houses. Birdhouses which are scale models of human houses will either be ignored by birds or be taken by English sparrows and starlings, neither of which species needs to be attracted. English sparrows and starlings are indiscriminate nesters, and most gardens will have them anyway without seeking to attract them.

In addition, Wesley does what Martin only seems to do: he "interweaves" material from different sources, as well as synthesizing information from his sources with information he
has accumulated from personal experience:

Generally the wood should be one half inch thick, although three quarter inch is all right (Schutz 61). A rough finish on the inside is needed so birds can climb to the hole (Schutz 61). Another aid for birds getting out of a birdhouse is to mount the birdhouse so it tilts forward at the top ("Nest"). If you buy a commercial birdhouse that has finished wood inside, you can score the inside of the front of the house to provide a surface the birds can climb up.

Nevertheless, the essay has its problems. Near the end, where according to the interviews Wesley felt constrained to use less detail in order to avoid exceeding the maximum length, the presentation at times becomes somewhat choppy and colorless:

The floor should be five inches by five inches. The depth should be eight inches. The entrance should be six inches above the floor. The diameter of the entrance should be an inch and a half. The birdhouse should be mounted five to ten feet above the ground ("Nest," Schutz 64, Sibley 3).

Despite Wesley’s willingness to sacrifice style and detail near the end, he was unable to stay within the 1000-word maximum. Although the rough draft comes close at 1070 words, the final copy, lengthened by additions which answer questions Ms. Harris wrote in the margins of the rough draft, is 1224 words long.

Nevertheless, despite the choppy sentences in the third of the quoted excerpts, Wesley’s paper is for the most part highly readable as well as informative. It also averages less than one error in spelling, punctuation, or grammar per page, unless one counts failure to hyphenate in phrases such as
"three quarter inch." The citations are accurate, and Wesley goes to great lengths to avoid plagiarism, using quotation marks around not only "in late winter or very early spring" but also similarly innocuous phrases such as "with a strong insect spray" and "near the house or outbuildings." As one would expect from the topic, the paper contains very little thought-provoking analysis or stylistic flair; but in Wesley's words, it would make "a nice little pamphlet."

Although any paragraph from Zachary's essay would work almost as well, perhaps the second paragraph best typifies the essay as a whole:

The history of television is rather unique. It was invented after the radio, so it wasn't the first attempt at nationwide news and entertainment. However, it was unique in the since that it replaced the imagination, by placing the picture before people. Naturally, people loved it, especially children. Now they could see their favorite heroes riding the range, fighting the indians, and keeping the law. However, t.v. was still in its early childhood at this time. Society sat back occasionally and watched the tube, then they went back to their lives, their work, and their schools. T.v. was only something people did in their spare time.

Composition teachers will probably recognize the above paragraph as an excerpt from a familiar genre: the pseudoinformative essay, in which a student mimics the conventions of expository prose while lacking any information most readers would not already share. Other paragraphs contain such pseudoinformative passages as

--The television is an American institution. Almost every household in America has at least one television, if not two or three.
Television is a very important part of society. It keeps us informed, and helps us to learn many new things.

Timed impromptu essays by beginning college students are full of such passages, as are many 500-word themes in First-Year Composition. But Ms. Harris had a right to expect more. Zachary was turning in the paper for a 300-level composition course, a course requiring only three graded essays prior to the final exam, a course in which almost a month had been devoted to this assignment.

Zachary was also turning in the paper in response to the only assignment all semester that required citations. Zachary cited two sources, once each, in his essay. One citation occurs after the sentences, "T.v. problems begin and end in a matter of thirty minutes. In real life, it takes time to solve problems." The cited page in the "source" discusses television as a "daydream machine" but says nothing about solving problems over time. Thus, the citation serves no apparent purpose other than to justify listing the book on the Works Cited page—or rather in the Works Cited list, since Zachary did not place the list on a separate page. The other citation occurs after the sentence, "Everything we see on t.v. these days is some form of new, according to Ronald Berman." No page number is indicated, and no quotation marks are used. Page 103 of Berman's book contains the sentence, "This book has argued that nearly everything we see on TV is a form of news." Thus, this citation, which provides only incomplete
information, follows a sentence of borderline plagiarism.

Other than the sentence quoted above, Zachary’s essay appears to have no difficulties with plagiarism. However, other elements of the essay demonstrate Zachary’s lack of commitment to his task. The essay contains no title. The printout’s spacing is off, so that lines which should appear at the bottom of one page instead appear at the top of the next. While Martin and Wesley devote several sentences to detailed descriptions of their audiences, Zachary has provided only a handwritten "general audience." While Martin and Wesley both exceed the 1000-word maximum, Zachary is more than 100 words short of the 800-word minimum. Zachary’s essay averages about ten errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar per page, including typographical errors such as "some form of new," with superfluous commas being the most frequent difficulty.

The students’ experiences and their papers support to some extent Stotsky’s and Kuhlthau’s view that in research-based writing, the focus ideally should emerge during research and prior to the writing of the rough draft. Martin and Wesley, each of whom was able to describe his paper’s focus and structure during interviews prior to writing the first draft, both produced generally successful papers with little apparent difficulty, while Zachary, for whom no focusing idea emerged prior to the writing of the rough draft, had to start almost from scratch during revision and still produced a weak
paper with no discernible focusing idea.

While granting Stotsky's and Kuhlthau's point in this case, we must distinguish between causes and effects. Zachary's failure to find a focus prior to writing his draft was not the cause of his paper's weakness; rather, the paper's weakness and his failure to find a focus during his search process (to the extent that he had a search process) were caused by a lack of effort, stemming from a lack of commitment to the task and to school in general. Moreover, Martin's and Wesley's focuses for their papers did not emerge as a result of their writing and their thinking during the search process, as Kuhlthau and, especially, Stotsky suggest; as with some of the Basic Writers discussed in Chapter Four, Martin and Wesley discovered their focus almost as soon as they selected their topics, before they even began to search for sources. Unlike the Basic Writers, however, Martin and Wesley discovered their focus largely because of the explicit, restrictive nature of the assignment. Being required to write short papers with informative aims, Martin adopted an "introductory-textbook" focus, and Wesley adopted a "how-to" focus, as the natural approaches to informative discourse about shamanism and birdhouses, respectively.

Grades, Teacher Comments, and Student Reactions

However else one might evaluate Martin's and Wesley's strategies for dealing with Ms. Harris's comments on their rough drafts, those strategies were pragmatically successful.
Martin’s paper received an A-, while Wesley’s received an A, Kari’s received a B, and Zachary’s received an F.

Ms. Harris’s written comments at the end of Martin’s paper, beside the grade, praise the choice of topic and the "surprise value" of the paper’s information and describe the paper as "very interesting." The comments also, however, question the paper’s organization.

When interviewed, Ms. Harris said that Martin’s paper "was pretty well written and contained very few errors." She also stated, without my pointing it out, that in responding to her rough-draft comments about the need to rely less on one source and to "interweave" sources, Martin had simply changed his citations without actually changing the material. "Sophisticated students learn to do that," she said. "I suppose that’s all right, although it makes me uneasy. But he improved his paper over the rough draft in other ways, too."

In a final interview which took no more than a minute, Martin stated that he was pleased with the grade and the written comments the paper received. Asked if there was anything he wished to get on the record which he had not been asked about, he replied, "I said what I had to say at the end of that very first interview"—when he asked to add the comment about having to cater to the stylistic preferences of English teachers.

Perhaps cautious after Wesley’s journal entries about her written comments, Ms. Harris wrote at the end of Wesley’s
paper, beside the grade, only "Interesting! A good job."
"Wesley did a good job of taking something boring and making it worthwhile," Ms. Harris said when interviewed. "It's not my favorite type of paper, but he certainly did everything I could ask for with the subject." Wesley, in his final interview, naturally seemed content with the grade, but seemed to derive little sense of accomplishment from his work on the assignment.

Although Kari did not provide me with a copy of her paper, some of Ms. Harris's written comments on the paper, as well as Kari's reactions to those comments, were discussed earlier in this chapter. When interviewed, Ms. Harris praised Kari for "narrowing her topic wisely" but described her information as "mostly leftovers from a history class she took"--a statement which, with "religion" substituted for "history," could have been made of Martin's paper, as well. Ms. Harris also stated that Kari's paper contained "documentation problems" and did not always avoid bias, as required by the assignment. "But overall it was an okay paper, especially considering how much class she's missed and how many things have gone wrong in her personal life this term," she added. Kari said of the grade, "I wasn't necessarily thrilled, but I wasn't surprised, either. I didn't exactly have ideal working conditions. Not a great grade, but considering the circumstances it was better than it could've been."
In the comment beside the grade on Zachary’s paper, Ms. Harris states that the paper lacks focus, contains many unsupported generalizations, is at times persuasive rather than informative, and fails to cite the minimum number of sources. The comment also suggests that the paper’s shortcomings may result partly from Zachary’s excessive absences and his failure to devote much time to the assignment.

When interviewed, Ms. Harris said, "Zachary put it off as long as possible, and frankly, his final copy shows that. He stayed way too broad." She added that she had told Zachary that the grade was a "high F" and that he could still get a C for the course—a comment very similar to the one Ms. Logan, the only other teacher in the study to give a paper an F, reported making to Greg, the student whose paper had failed, as discussed in Chapter Five. Finally, Ms. Harris stated:

He’s a very likeable fellow who sometimes reminds me of my own children. But he doesn’t come to class much, he mostly visits with friends when he’s there, and I’d be willing to bet he hasn’t read an assignment all term. Perhaps that sort of thing affected his grade; maybe there was something punitive in it. But only two sources? For a college research paper at the 300 level? Come on!

Zachary said of the grade, "It didn’t surprise me, since I didn’t put much work into the paper. I wasn’t happy with it, but I really didn’t care"—a comment very similar to the reaction by Greg, the other student whose paper failed, as discussed in Chapter Five. Asked about the written comments on the paper, Zachary stated that he could not remember what
the comments said. In fact, he added, "I can’t even hardly remember what I wrote the paper about." The interview took place a little more than three weeks after he had turned in the final copy and just over a week after Ms. Harris had returned the final copies along with her grades and comments.

On the average, Ms. Harris wrote far more on final copies of papers than did any of the four teachers discussed in the two preceding chapters. However, on the average she wrote less than half as much on the final copies as she did on the rough drafts: 96 words per paper on the final copies and 206 words per paper on the rough drafts. This contrast again suggests her familiarity with recent composition theory, since that theory generally stresses that working with the student’s evolving draft is more helpful than concentrating on "post-mortem" comments on the final copy.

However, the differences between rough draft totals and final copy totals vary widely from individual to individual. While Ms. Harris wrote 249 words Wesley’s rough draft, she wrote only 26 on his final copy. Besides the difficulty in finding anything besides "Nice work!" to say about an A paper on birdhouses, this contrast may again reflect Wesley’s journal responses to her rough-draft comments. In contrast, Ms. Harris wrote 190 words on Zachary’s final copy, nearly as many as the 214 she wrote on his rough draft. The lengthy final-draft comments appear to be partly an attempt to justify the failing grade and partly an attempt to rouse Zachary from
his academic lethargy. The tone is professional rather than punitive, and Ms. Harris rather charitably writes, "You've undoubtedly spent much time on certain aspects of this paper." Overall, however, the "wakeup-call" nature of the comments is clear: "Your excessive absences during the preparation of this paper probably hurt you. If you had been in class, I don't see how you could have strayed so far from the mark."

One final point about teacher comments: in her final interview, Ms. Harris stated that because she now knew that Wesley was sensitive about negative comments, she had written far less on the rough draft of his next paper, the persuasive essay. But in his final interview, Wesley said, "On the draft of this latest paper, the persuasive one, I wish she had put more comments than she did." Perhaps because he felt more committed to the persuasive essay, he was more eager to revise this paper in order to improve it; or perhaps he was simply somewhat contrary.

Conclusions

As the preceding paragraph demonstrates, surely one conclusion composition teachers can draw from this chapter is that you can't please 'em all. Martin digs out every detail he can learn about his teacher's stylistic preferences, yet resents conforming to those preferences; Zachary feels unable to reach the assignment's minimum length, yet Wesley feels unable to avoid exceeding the assignment's maximum length; Wesley drops classes to avoid writing long research papers,
yet suggests that one problem with this research-paper assignment was that the paper was not required to be long enough. Although all four students were pleasant and friendly during interviews, and none seemed disgruntled with Ms. Harris as a teacher, they were certainly a difficult group to satisfy. Perhaps those of us who teach should remember these four students whenever we receive a batch of student evaluations.

More significantly, the chapter demonstrates that even the innovations most favored by composition theorists will not automatically have the desired effect on students. Like a centipede trying to follow a set of directions for walking, Kari seemed inhibited by being forced into rhetorical awareness as she wrote. Asked to specify an audience, Wesley seemed enthusiastic about writing for his daughter—but evidently wrote two separate versions of his essay, one for his daughter and one for his teacher. Furthermore, despite the requirement to specify an audience, all four students still clearly envisioned teacher-as-grader as their primary audience, almost to the exclusion of any other.

The chapter also demonstrates how difficult a task teachers face in responding to rough drafts of essays, the final versions of which they will eventually grade. Even though Ms. Harris's written comments on the rough drafts remained for the most part admirably non-authoritarian, the students responded almost as if given sets of absolute
commands. Significantly, Ms. Harris justified Martin's A- in part by stating that he had improved his paper during revision, apparently unaware that his half-hour revision consisted entirely of accommodating her suggestions and corrections. Perhaps in most cases, teachers responding to rough drafts need to avoid editing for errors in mechanics and small wording problems, leaving students responsible for their own editing. Perhaps teachers should restrict themselves to pointing out a draft's successes suggesting broad guidelines for revising a draft, leaving the student room for decision-making within those guidelines—as well as, of course, room to reject the advice altogether. Given the grading system and the power imbalance between teacher and student, more detailed, specific suggestions may cause the teacher's voice to dominate a text which should be controlled by the student's voice.

Finally, the chapter demonstrates that as Edward White has observed, few tasks in undergraduate instruction are more important and more demanding than "the construction of appropriate writing tasks" (82). Some of the other chapters of this study describe the pride and satisfaction students expressed in completing their research-paper assignments. None of the four students described in this chapter expressed any such satisfaction. Equally disturbing, Martin and Wesley, both of whom unenthusiastically defined the topic as "reporting other people's facts" and both of whom completely
subordinated their own opinions to the teacher's during revision, received A's for their efforts, while Kari, the one student who chose to write about a topic about which she deeply cared, had difficulty "avoiding bias" and perhaps had her grade lowered as a result. The informative aim, which Schwegler and Shamoon describe as part of most undergraduates' definition of the research paper, may not be appropriate in research-paper assignments for relatively advanced undergraduates.

In closing, it is worthwhile to remember that Martin and Wesley, the two students who received A's on this assignment, responded to Ms. Harris's suggestions in ways Ms. Harris portrayed as typical of high school students--and that Martin and Kari, despite their high GPA's, described high school as "a joke" except for those classes requiring somewhat lengthy, persuasive research papers. Especially in research-paper assignments, with their mystique of setting challenges for students, it may be as serious a mistake for teachers to demand too little from students as it is to demand too much from them.
Notes

1. The University keeps copies of all completed senior theses. As of the time this study is being completed, over two years after the interviews with Kari took place, no senior thesis from Kari has been added to the University's collection.

2. Actually, one comment from a peer editor apparently influenced Martin's final draft: after one student suggested that Martin change the phrase "spirit world" to "spiritual world," Martin wrote as part of his audience description, "The reader should be able to comprehend some basic concepts of religion in general, such as 'spirit world' and so on."
CHAPTER VIII
THREE HONORS STUDENTS
COMPOSING SENIOR THESES

The following chapter examines the processes of three honors students at a somewhat selective University as they complete senior theses in history and chemistry. Thus, this chapter differs from the preceding four chapters in four important ways. First, it focuses on research-based writing in disciplines other than English. Second, it focuses on highly competent, advanced undergraduate students writing on topics in their academic majors. Third, it focuses on students who by undergraduate standards have been given a great deal of time to produce unusually elaborate essays. Fourth, it focuses on students who are working outside the traditional classroom structure.

First, the chapter describes methods of recruiting the students and observing their work. The chapter then describes the students' personalities and backgrounds, attempting to establish what elements have contributed to their academic success. After this, the students' senior thesis chairs are described, in order to establish their potential influence on the students' researching and writing experiences. The chapter then examines the students' methods of selecting topics; representing the task; finding and organizing
information; and writing and revising the theses. Finally, the chapter analyzes the completed theses, discusses the thesis committees’ evaluations of those theses, and draws conclusions.

Background

The Course

The senior thesis is required of any student at the University who wishes to graduate with departmental honors. Students are expected to complete their senior theses over a period of two semesters, receiving a total of four semester hours’ credit for completing the thesis. To graduate with departmental honors, students must attain GPA’s of at least 3.2 overall and at least 3.5 in their majors and must pass their senior theses, including an oral defense, with honors. To graduate with highest departmental honors, students must attain GPA’s of at least 3.5 overall and at least 3.75 in their majors and must pass their senior theses, including an oral defense, with highest honors.

Sample Selection

In December of 1988, while at the University’s library, I saw David, who had been a student of mine in high school. We began talking, with David describing his upcoming senior thesis in history to me and with me describing my dissertation plans to him. He expressed much interest in my project, and since I wanted to observe the processes of honors students completing advanced projects, I asked him if he would be
willing to be the first member of my sample, and he agreed.

Later, wishing to observe the processes of students who were writing about research in the sciences, I contacted Dr. Carter, a chemistry professor who, I had been told, often chaired senior thesis committees. After I explained my project to him, he asked if I had called because of a recent article in the local newspaper, an article discussing the fact that a student of Dr. Carter’s, named Vijay, had been named to U.S.A. Today’s Academic All-America team. Although I had not read the article, I expressed a desire to observe Vijay as he completed his senior thesis.

As it turned out, not only was Vijay willing to take part in my study, but he and Dr. Carter both also mentioned my project to Helen, another student beginning a senior thesis in chemistry under Dr. Carter. She too volunteered to take part in my study.

Coincidentally, Helen and I knew each other slightly from before the project. She had attended the same high school where I had taught David, and although she had not taken classes from me, her older sister had. But when she agreed to take part in the study, she had not known whose study it was, and when I agreed to work with another of Dr. Carter’s students in addition to Vijay, I had not known who that student was.

These three students were the only ones in my study who received no extra credit for participating. Yet they were
also the three who were the most generous about sharing their
time, their thoughts, and even their emotions. Several
reasons for their behavior come to mind. In the first place,
two of the three were far more verbal than most others in the
sample, so that information flowed from them more easily. In
particular, they seemed to have acquired a trait which William
Perry claims separates the liberally educated person from the
anti-intellectual, a trait which Perry did not find in most
Harvard students until around their senior years: the ability
to think about their own ways of thinking (39-40). Second,
their theses were a far larger part of their lives than were
the research papers other students in my sample were
completing. When I told David, "You’re an ideal person for my
sample because you’re so in touch with what’s going on in your
head," he replied, "I couldn’t do this thesis if I weren’t in
touch with what’s going on in my head. You have to live it."
Finally, the similarity in tasks—we were all working
independently on long-term, large-scale research projects—
cause us to empathize with each other. These three were the
only students in my sample who regularly asked about the
progress of my study and who drew comparisons between their
tasks and mine during the interviews. This has been the only
chapter in which, during my own writing process, I have been
struck by the similarity between the problems faced by the
students I was describing and the problems I was facing in my
own writing.
Data Collection

Most of my data consisted of interviews with each of the three students. I conducted more interviews, and longer interviews, with these students than with most other students in my sample. I interviewed David and Vijay seven times apiece and Helen five times, with the interviews usually lasting about an hour. I also interviewed Dr. Carter twice and Dr. Montgomery, David's committee chair, once. Of the 22 interviews with the students and their committee chairs, 16 were audiotaped, two were partly audiotaped and partly reproduced from notes, and four were reproduced from notes.

Unfortunately, my interviews with Vijay and Helen began rather late in their thesis processes. Both were writing senior theses based on experiments they had performed as laboratory assistants for Dr. Carter before they joined the study. So although I began interviewing them before they began writing the first drafts of their papers, I also began after an important part of their research was already completed. David, in contrast, was first interviewed at the beginning of his research process, before he had narrowed his general subject to a specific topic. All three students were last interviewed after they had orally defended their theses and turned in their final copies. The interviews spanned a period of about three months for Vijay and Helen and almost seven months for David. Dr. Carter's first interview took place weeks before Vijay and Helen were scheduled to show him
first drafts of their theses, and the second took place a few
days after they had defended their theses orally. Dr.
Montgomery’s interview took place a few days after David had
defended his thesis orally and handed in his final copy.

In addition to the interviews, I was able to observe two
of the three students during thesis-related activities. On
three occasions I followed David through the library as he
located and, sometimes, photocopied pages from sources. As he
worked, David explained why he was doing what he was doing,
and I took notes. These sessions ranged from about fifteen
minutes to almost two hours in length. On one other occasion,
I sat with David for 2 1/2 hours as he read and took notes
from nineteen newspaper articles related to his thesis topic.
He voiced his thoughts as he read, and I audiotaped the
session. I also sat in on and took notes during Vijay’s oral
defense of his thesis.

I collected the final copies of the students’ theses and
asked the students to provide all preliminary writings as
well. Vijay and Helen provided me with four and five
preliminary drafts, respectively, with certain drafts
containing Dr. Carter’s markings of suggested revisions.
Apart from a few proofreading changes, however, many of the
later drafts are virtually identical to one another. While
both provided me with every printed version of their theses
beginning with the drafts they showed to Dr. Carter, each had
written at least one version prior to the one shown to Dr.
Carter, and I did not receive these earlier versions.

David, however, seems to have provided every document connected with his project: two drafts of his original thesis proposal; a handwritten opening on an entirely different topic, one he discarded; almost a thousand pages of photocopies from books and periodicals, sometimes with his marginalia and underlinings; a note pad filled with comments about everything from the locations of possible sources to questions David had written down to focus his research; more than a dozen printouts of the first draft in various stages, often covered with crossouts, arrows, and marginal additions; two later drafts extensively marked by Dr. Montgomery for revision; four copies of a still later draft, each copy carrying the revision markings of a different member of David’s thesis committee; a copy of the final version; and miscellaneous other documents, too numerous to list here. When David presented me with this material, everything was in a Budweiser box intended to hold a case of 12-ounce bottles; the papers filled the box to bulging capacity.

The Students

For the purposes of this study, the most important trait of these three students is also the most obvious one: by undergraduate standards, they were all superior students. All three had originally enrolled in the University as part of what this study will call the Honors Scholars program. Entrance into this program is based on high school
transcripts, ACT scores, and recommendations. The program is highly selective: in any given year, only slightly over 1 percent of the University's incoming students are enrolled as Honors Scholars. As Table 7 on page 479 demonstrates, all three students excelled in high school and as undergraduates, and all three went on to further education after receiving their bachelor's degrees. Even though a wide gap in competence separates these three from most college students, there was also a gap within the group: teachers who knew them regarded Vijay as unusually gifted even for the honors program's standards, with Helen and David more typical of Honors Scholars.

To some extent, the three students' academic excellence is a product of their upbringing. As can be seen in Table 7, Vijay's parents are both highly educated teachers. When discussing teachers who had influenced his educational development, Vijay said, "Of course, my greatest teachers have been my parents. From the beginning, I was encouraged--forced, really--to take my schoolwork seriously." Although Vijay's parents were both born and raised in India, when I mentioned the high achievements of many immigrants and their children, he seemed wary of generalizing, saying, "It's not where you're born and the culture; it's your parents and the home that are the big influences."

David also credited his highly educated parents with contributing to his academic success. But unlike Vijay, David
Table 7
HONORS STUDENTS
COMPLETING SENIOR THESIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>High School Rank</th>
<th>Coll. GPA</th>
<th>After Receiving B.A.</th>
<th>Course Load</th>
<th>Hours/Wk employed</th>
<th>Father’s Education</th>
<th>Mother’s Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4th in graduating class of approx. 100</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Teaching English and studying Japanese at Japanese school; plans eventually to attend law school or PhD program in economics in U.S.</td>
<td>13 hrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2nd in graduating class of approx. 100</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Attending dental school at state university</td>
<td>13 hrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Approx. 10th grade</td>
<td>Approx. 10th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijay</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1st in graduating class of approx. 300</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Attending medical school at nationally prestigious univ.</td>
<td>12 hrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David’s topic & field - A 1917 garment workers’ strike in the city where the university is located.

Helen’s topic & field - Esterification of a Quinine Derivative (Chemistry)

Vijay’s topic & field - The citric acid cycle and the origins of life (Chemistry)
attributed his family upbringing to larger group dynamics, saying, "Jewish, the first born male—I fit right into the mold." On another occasion, comparing himself with students from less socially and intellectually advantaged students, he said:

By this point in my life, I’ve absorbed so many of the benefits of my particular class that it would be really hard to keep me from achieving—I don’t want to say my birthright, but sort of what’s been pointed out to me as my goal. I’m pretty much gonna go where you could say my upbringing has more or less determined I’m gonna go.

In contrast, Helen portrayed her Greek-immigrant parents as having little formal education and described her familial and ethnic backgrounds as inhibiting, not encouraging, academic ambition:

My mother would say, "If you don’t do well, just marry a rich man." And my father would always say, "If you don’t do well," like he expected we wouldn’t do well. They’re from the old country, and because we’re girls, we’re not expected to do as well. We get that kind of shit.

Although Helen laughed after she said that last sentence, it was the only time during the interviews that she used strong language. The only educational advantage Helen saw in her family background was her fluency in Greek, a language used extensively in scientific discourse.

Nevertheless, Helen may have received more parental assistance in succeeding academically than she realized. First, there was the example of her father’s ambition and ability: with little formal education and as an outsider in American culture, he had become a highly successful
businessman. Second, Helen’s older sister, formerly a high school valedictorian and Honors Scholar at the University, was completing medical school at the time of the interviews, while her younger sister, formerly a high school honors student, was attending a highly selective university. The pattern of success seems more than coincidental.

Regardless of parental messages, Helen certainly received strong messages about academic success from her older sister. Helen described her older sister’s getting angry when Helen received an A on an assignment for which the older sister had received an A-. "That little minus sign drove her crazy," Helen said. "We’ve had a couple of classes together, and thank goodness we both made A’s. The night before the test, we’d be at each other’s throats."

Thus, one suspects that for Helen, as well as more obviously for Vijay and David, the Bakhtinian "voices" from family and perhaps ethnic group insistently asserted, "Academic success is an important goal, and you have the ability to succeed."

Besides parents, one’s previous teachers can be important "voices" shaping behavior on a writing project. Helen, who throughout the interviews stressed her need to work independently rather than relying on Dr. Carter or modeling her thesis on the work of a previous research assistant, described with pride the time when her fifth grade teacher noticed that she had begun solving challenging problems on her
own rather than always asking for the teacher’s help. Vijay stated that a ninth grade teacher’s choosing him as winner of the class’s science award was the single most important event in his educational development:

I was yearning to be—not honored, but appreciated, to have someone tell me, "You're really good at this. You have promise. You can accomplish things with this." The key event occurred when my science teacher, Mr. Lawson, saw in me a greater potential than I had been thinking about. From then on, I began to take science and my studies as a whole more seriously. I mean, winning the award wasn't easy: it was an accelerated class, and there were others who were as interested in winning it as I was. To get it means that I was better than them. And by continually supporting my efforts, Mr. Lawson planted a seed in me that grew into an obsession with wanting to understand.

Vijay, in effect, still hears Mr. Lawson’s encouraging voice. At the end of his final interview, when asked if he wanted to get on record anything which we had not yet discussed, Vijay spoke of the importance of teachers: "Teachers have that extra calling, not only to impart basic skills but to support and encourage their students. That makes a difference, and I’m here as evidence of the difference." During this discussion, once again, the main example Vijay used was Mr. Lawson and the science award. Mr. Lawson may well have been a major force in Vijay’s decision to major in a science. Also, while he worked on his senior thesis, Vijay was again extremely concerned with winning an award, one that in this study will be called the Kerrigan Award, given annually to the graduating senior who has produced the best senior thesis.
Clearly, Vijay associated academic excellence with tangible recognition for one’s achievements. In this respect, one can hear the "voices" not only of teachers like Mr. Lawson, but also of Vijay’s parents: Vijay used the term "quantum leap" to describe the change in his outlook during his junior high years, then added, "I began to internalize the competitive nature my parents had exposed to me, rather than just doing well in class for their sake."

Nevertheless, Vijay’s psychology resists a neat dichotomy between learning motivated by tangible rewards and learning for its own sake. Vijay described the award as evidence "that I was better than them [sic]," but also as leading to "an obsession with wanting to understand." He also said of the "quantum leap" in his education, "I became more competitive about the work, studying because I wanted to do better than Joe Schmo there," yet he also described himself as staying after science classes in high school to ask questions of his teacher, not to gain recognition but because "what we had talked about in class had pricked a veritable bubble of ideas that would just gush through." When trying to explain why some people become outstanding students while others do not, he said, "Ultimately, it has to do with how we look at learning: as a means to an end or as an end in itself. If you’re doing it just to move up the ladder, that won’t do."

Perhaps Vijay best summarized his attitude when I directly asked him whether he was motivated more by internal
or external goals when he wrote. "What I consider my best is
definitely 'A' work," he said. "And I always give my best, so
I expect an A. But the A is just a byproduct. Getting my
point across is the main thing." His sincerity in this
statement is demonstrated by his comments in another
interview. When discussing one of his papers which had earned
an A but which the professor had said could be improved with
more time and effort, Vijay expressed the desire to take an
independent study class to rework the paper. The A was not
enough; he wanted the paper to express his point as well as
possible.

Helen also portrayed herself as having been extremely
academically competitive in high school. She described having
felt upset when, despite having the highest GPA in her
graduating class, she lost the honor of being high school
valedictorian because her physical education classes carried
fewer "honor points" than did another student's band classes.
In the intervening years, however, she had come to view the
incident with amusement, crediting it with helping her to shed
the all-work-no-play image which had dogged her in high
school. "Sometimes somebody who knew me from high school will
see me out on the weekend, and they'll be like, 'Helen, what
are you doing here?''" she said, laughing. "I'm allowed!
It's been years since high school! I'm more comfortable now."
While Vijay stated that winning the award for the outstanding
senior thesis had been a goal of his ever since his first year
at the University, Helen did not even know that the award existed until roughly a month before her completed thesis was due. Even then, she regarded the award largely as a minor annoyance, Dr. Carter having moved her thesis deadline up by a few days to accommodate the award committee.

David seemed motivated almost entirely by love of learning, not by need for external recognition. If he was even aware of the Kerrigan Award, he never mentioned it during interviews which took place over seven months. And he said of the senior thesis,

> Some people do it because they want to graduate with departmental honors so they can get into a good graduate school and make big bucks. I’ve got nothing against money, but for some reason I don’t care about that sort of thing right now. I’m doing it because I think it’ll be one of the most educational experiences I’ll have at this school. I’m enjoying doing it. It lifts me out of just wasting my time and into using my time for an incredible learning experience.

In summary, then, although Vijay possessed a clever wit and spoke with pleasure of his games of pool with Dr. Carter, overall he emerged as a serious student who saw no need to hide his ambition and his need for recognition. He pointedly mentioned that despite being accepted at prestigious schools such as the University of Chicago, he had chosen to go to the University to save money for medical school, since a combination of scholarships had paid all his expenses at the University. He added that he had not chosen to attend the University until he had examined the Honors Scholars program and the chemistry department and had concluded, “I could go
places with a degree from here, as long as I did other things, too—research, campus activities, and so forth." Thus, he said, he had set his goals, thinking, "This is where I'm gonna wind up, and this is how I'm gonna get there." He described Louis Pasteur as his career role model, and he fully expected a career combining medical research, medical practice, and teaching in a medical school. His eloquent, almost formal speaking style is typified by a comment he made about a trip to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was interviewed by representatives of Harvard's medical school: "I got a taste of the fine history of scientific endeavor, combined with service to fellow man, that is represented at Harvard." No other student in the sample ever sounded like that.

Although Helen described an aerobics class she was taking as being a great stress reducer, she seemed far more relaxed and casual than Vijay did. Despite being accepted into dental school, she never mentioned career ambitions or plans to attend a particular school. She laughed frequently, and her speech style, with frequent pauses and mid-sentence shifts as she groped for words, belied her formidable intelligence. For example, describing the effect of not being valedictorian on her social life, she said:

I mean, I wasn't socially, I didn't go out, I mean, I didn't do anything. So maybe it made me feel—in a way, it made me feel like, "Well, she's"—I mean, in a way, I should've been thinking about myself, but at least the pressure, I'm not as pressured, I don't seem like that person that, you know, I mean, I should've been, I was thinking about myself, but it made me seem like I wasn't. . . .
This speech style is no mere detail of characterization: as will be demonstrated later, it seems to correlate with Helen’s composing process. It also made her thesis task more formidable, since she would have to defend her thesis orally.

Although Dr. Montgomery said that David’s image among the professors who taught Honors Scholars was that of a "painfully shy, nonverbal type," during the interviews he seemed just the opposite--the most talkative person in the entire sample, one who approached even seemingly mundane tasks with the gusto one associates with beer commercials. Once, when walking toward the library stacks to begin an afternoon’s research, David turned to me, grinning broadly, and said, "I always feel a little jolt of energy when I’m approaching here. I know what I’m about to put myself through, and it’s exciting." When I observed him in the library as he found or read sources, he always seemed to be not only excited by what he was learning but also amused by the sidelines. Glancing at a 1917 newspaper article which alluded to a trial for "unlawful carnal knowledge," he said, "Great. They give you a test, and if you don’t know enough, they throw you in jail." He said of research papers during his final interview, "I think people love ‘em, even if they bitch about it. I bitched, but I loved doing this one"--this despite thesis-related experiences, described later in this chapter, which would have traumatized many students.
David was also active in campus politics and planned to go into politics eventually, following either law school or graduate work in economics or interdisciplinary studies. This career interest also suggests that he was not the "painfully shy, nonverbal type."

Finally, David was influenced in his thesis by a set of unexpected "voices." Although politically leftist and drawn to the academic life, he was drawn toward conflict. The books he mentioned as pleasure reading during our interviews were The Art of War and a book about the only Israeli killed during the Entebbe raid. The first semester of his thesis work was marked by fierce, spectacular public quarrels with a former girlfriend, and he was skilled in the martial arts, an interest which he said helped him with his thesis:

Schoolwork has become much easier for me because of the martial arts, which are harder than anything else I’ve ever done in my life. The martial arts teach you internal discipline and drive. And working on the thesis becomes relaxing by comparison because I’m not worried about someone kicking me in the face.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, David’s interest in conflict also played a major role in his selection of a topic and in his view of the entire thesis experience.

Writing Background

Besides family members and early teachers, one would expect previous writing instructors to be prominent "voices" in the students’ composing processes. But the three students said relatively little about their past academic writing
experiences. Vijay did recall having written at least three research papers in high school, while Helen mentioned always having to use five-paragraph-theme form in high school, suggesting that she wrote a number of essays, but not necessarily research papers. As David's former English teacher, I can attest that he wrote at least three research papers in high school, but during interviews he never mentioned his high school writing experiences.

All three portrayed themselves as having written what they perceived as relatively few research papers in college: David at various times mentioned having written three previous college research papers and Vijay one, while Helen never mentioned any. Helen and Vijay both stated that most courses in their chemistry majors required no graded writing other than an occasional short-answer question on an exam.

As Honors Scholars, all three had been exempt from the University's composition requirement, a requirement which at least theoretically includes four research papers spread over two courses. Instead, they had taken a two-semester honors humanities sequence which involved a great deal of reading (42 books, according to Vijay) and a great deal of writing, but no research papers and in fact very few traditional essays. David said of Dr. Rice, the teacher from whom all three students had taken the humanities sequence, "He doesn't have you write in traditional forms. He always wants to lead his students into something new." David stated that in both his
honors humanities sequence and in his history courses,

They always told us, "Don't research. Think and react to the material instead." When I was a student tutor, these composition students would come in, and they had to have all these note cards and number their note cards and all that. But in honors, the teachers assume you know how to do all that already, and they don't want you to do it anyway. We're more likely to be assigned a critical analysis of a book or a comparative analysis of two books. Same in history.

Thus it appears that the students, especially David, had received considerable encouragement to think critically and to incorporate ideas from other sources into their own writing, but relatively little direct college-level training in the production of research papers.

Both the chemistry and the history departments at the university had created courses to train their majors to research and write within their disciplines. In chemistry, these consisted of a one-credit junior-level course in researching chemical literature, up to four hours' worth of credit for supervised work as laboratory assistants, and a one-credit senior seminar centered on students' papers, usually detailing the students' work as laboratory assistants. In history, the courses were a three-credit junior-level course in research and bibliography and a three-credit senior-level course in which the students create research projects which put to use the skills they had presumably acquired during the junior-level course.

Vijay and Helen had taken all the chemistry courses mentioned in the preceding paragraph. David, however, had
bypassed the history sequence, instead taking a sequence of honors courses in the social sciences, courses not centered on researching and writing. Thus, while a non-Honors Scholar majoring in history would have been required to take four courses involving training in research and writing, David had taken none of these courses, a fact which he would later describe as causing him problems in his senior thesis.

While their personalities and backgrounds undoubtedly influenced the students’ processes in completing their senior theses, so did the advisors who chaired their theses. The study now turns its attention to those advisors.

The Teachers

Surely among the most prominent "voices" in the students’ writing were those of their thesis advisors, Dr. Carter and Dr. Montgomery. Both men were evidently highly respected at the university, each serving in a specially endowed professorship and each having won one or the other of the school’s two annual awards for outstanding professors. Both were portrayed, both by the students and by themselves, as highly demanding, even potentially intimidating, in their approach to students.

Unlike the other teachers discussed in this dissertation, both men regularly published scholarly work. This may well have been the most important element in their background; David said that he chose Dr. Montgomery as chair of his thesis committee after reading from books by several members of the
history department and finding Dr. Montgomery's style and tone more comfortable than those of other faculty members, and Vijay and Helen repeatedly praised Dr. Carter's ability to explain technical material clearly in his publications and described his publications as models for their own writing. Unlike most other teachers interviewed for this dissertation, Dr. Carter and Dr. Montgomery sometimes compared their students' writing tasks with their own writing tasks.

In fact, although the students and teachers never mentioned having discussed the writing process with one another, there was remarkable similarity between what the teachers said about their own writing processes and what the students did in composing their theses. When told that David had expressed the desire to return to his thesis sometime in the future to rewrite it for possible publication, Dr. Montgomery said,

I'd like to see him do that. But of course, that's true of anybody who writes anything. You write a book and you correct the galleys for publication and then you say, "I'd like another shot at it. Chapter Eight still stinks, and there's no real introduction." But you just have to let go sometime.

Composition specialists will find Dr. Montgomery's sentiments reassuringly familiar. For example, the last two sentences of Donald Murray's "The Maker's Eye: Revising Your Own Manuscripts," in Learning by Teaching, express an almost identical view. And David began the first draft of his thesis with a Murraysque "discovery draft," with no clear sense yet
of what he wanted to say, after which he revised more extensively than anyone else in this study.

Dr. Carter, in contrast, composed in a way composition specialists often warn their students against:

Sometimes I’ll sit here all morning with a wad of paper and have one paragraph to show for it, because with each sentence I’ll ask myself, "Does it say what I want it to say? Is it well written? Does it convey matters clearly and in an interesting way? Does it flow logically from the previous sentence?" So I’ll sit here from 7:30 to 11:30 and have six sentences by the end. But I don’t have to revise much after that.

Composition specialists generally cringe at such a demand for perfection in the first draft, often associating such a demand with writer’s block (see Rose, "Rigid," for example). As will be discussed later in this chapter, Vijay’s and Helen’s composing processes resembled Dr. Carter’s.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the students’ writing processes resembled those of their teachers. After all, the students unanimously admired their teachers’ writing as finished product, and they sought traits congenial to their own when they selected a thesis advisor.

Of course, the traits they sought generally had more to do with supervisory style than with composing process. David, in particular, sought an advisor who would not supervise too closely. In his first interview, David described as "nuts" a friend who had requested that her faculty advisor require her to report weekly on her progress and then added, "That’s one reason I picked Dr. Montgomery. He’s not all up in arms about
the way I do it." Unfortunately, this supervisory style eventually backfired to some extent in this case: Dr. Montgomery at first did not realize that David wished to graduate at the end of the summer quarter rather than the fall quarter, and later David and Dr. Montgomery both thought the summer deadline for the thesis was a week later than it actually was. Not surprisingly, then, David had massive deadline problems at the end. Interviewed after David had turned in the completed thesis, Dr. Montgomery said,

I did not follow David as closely as I normally do in projects like these. In retrospect, I wish I could’ve ridden herd on him, because when you agree to advise on one of these, you take on a certain responsibility. So I take some of the blame for the problems David encountered, and I told him so.

Because Vijay and Helen wrote senior theses based on work they had performed as Dr. Carter’s laboratory assistants, Dr. Carter naturally was familiar and closely involved with their projects from the beginning. In addition, Dr. Carter was by nature a close supervisor, with what he described as a "fetish" about deadlines. Extremely concerned with his students’ success, he described himself as losing sleep when Helen waited until perilously close to the final-copy deadline before showing him a draft of the thesis. "Her style of meeting deadlines panics me terribly," he said later.

The Hawthorne Effect

One other "voice" influencing the students’ processes should be mentioned: my own. While no other students in the entire sample described my study as affecting their research
paper processes, all three students discussed in this chapter did. All three agreed that the effect was beneficial, partly because it created short-term goals and deadlines without the fear of punishment if those goals and deadlines were not met. "Your study enhanced my work," Vijay said. "I knew that in a way, I had to be accountable to you every Tuesday, so that I had to have some new development or at least get closer to my final goal." Similarly, Helen said,

The interviews helped me to keep pushing. The final deadline seemed so distant compared to tests and stuff in other classes, but I was meeting with you every week. So I'd feel bad and think, "Oh, my gosh! Mr. Sutton needs to know this stuff, and since the last time I saw him I haven't done anything!" It made me think that I had to get this done because people were counting on me.

Despite his disdain for weekly scheduled reports to his advisor, David also felt that the interviews helped him, not only by providing intermediate deadlines but also by making him think about his own ideas for the thesis. In a statement that mixes self-analysis with sexism, David said,

I'm using your study to sort of warm up my thinking. I have to report to somebody, but not somebody who's grading me, so that helps. Also, it's good to talk about my work with somebody who understands and can use what I'm saying, not some ditzy blonde or anything.

While the students felt that they benefited from being part of a composition study as they learned to write within their chosen academic disciplines, their thesis advisors were less enamored with composition's role in preparing students to write within their academic disciplines. This chapter now
turns to the issue of the relationship between writing in composition classes and writing in other disciplines.

Writing in the Disciplines

Neither Dr. Montgomery nor Dr. Carter viewed the training students received in the University's composition classes as sufficient to prepare students to write in their disciplines. Dr. Montgomery said of the history department's courses in research and writing:

We instituted the junior-level class about ten years ago, largely because our term papers in class were so lousy. I'm not condemning the English folks, but they're teaching a generic research paper, and every discipline asks for its own specific things. So what we did was take the comp course and expand it to how a historian does this kind of work—where to find things, how to use the indexes unique to the history profession, how to turn the evidence over and over and ask the kinds of questions that the evidence can answer. And then we add the usual kinds of bibliography things. Most kids, by their junior year, have absolutely no goddamn idea how to make a footnote or a Works Cited page.

Dr. Montgomery's statement supports Richard Larson's view of the generic research paper as a "non-form," although Dr. Montgomery does not seem to be arguing, as Larson does, that instruction in a generic research paper has no place in composition.

When Dr. Montgomery says "footnote," he does mean "note," not "parenthetical citation." Both Dr. Montgomery and Dr. Carter wrote in disciplines in which endnotes remained the standard citation form, and both complained that most students come to them either knowing nothing at all about citation or else assuming that parenthetical citation is standard in all
disciplines.

Dr. Montgomery's statement contrasts with what David had said about his history teachers as not wanting research. David's view may well have resulted from his having an interdisciplinary Humanities major, a major generally taken only by Honors Scholars, and thus having been exempted from the History Department's research-writing courses.

While Dr. Montgomery merely noted the limitations of the generic research paper as training for discipline-specific writing, Dr. Carter criticized the composition program's approach to writing itself, an approach which emphasized freewriting and multiple drafts of essays:

The way they're teaching it now in our English department is to just start writing, write everything that comes into your mind, write, write, write, write, write, and fix it later. Well, I'm not an expert on that, but that's not the way I learned to write, and I couldn't operate that way at all. But then, I'm not really sure I learned much about writing from my writing classes. I think 99 percent of what I learned about writing is from reading.

Dr. Carter advocated organizing composition classes around having the students read a given number of books and then discussing the writing techniques in those books, thus centering on finished products rather than process. Perhaps significantly, in his academic writing, Dr. Carter largely knows what he wants to say before he begins the first draft, since that first draft has been preceded by literally years of laboratory experiments and reading of related literature. Thus, the concept of the first draft as a vehicle for
discovery is largely alien to him. His main goal, when he begins the draft, is to state what he already knows as clearly and concisely as possible. Conciseness is crucial to Dr. Carter because the almost prohibitive expense of space in journals makes for short articles. He stated:

The communications section of the Journal of the American Chemical Society is recognized as where some of the most important chemistry goes, and those papers are one page long. And so we're encouraged to write very concisely. You might describe months of work in a single sentence like "Compound one was reacted with sodium periodate to yield compound two." Arguably the most important science article of this century, Watson and Crick's piece on DNA structure, was half a page long.

Dr. Carter also observed that while the sciences value conciseness in writing, the humanities and the social sciences generally seem to value elaboration. Furthermore, he saw his own writing process as conducive to concise texts, and he saw the freewrite-and-revise approach as leading to more elaborated texts. Thus to some extent, he saw the composition program's approach as potentially harmful to the writing of science majors.

Nevertheless, Dr. Carter was not the inveterate foe many composition-specialist readers might assume from the past few paragraphs. He emphasized the importance of writing skills in his discipline and took justifiable pride in his own formidable writing skills. An omniverous reader both within and beyond his academic discipline, he saw the humanities and the sciences as academic bedfellows, aligned against what he called "those biz ad types." Most importantly, in his work
with Vijay and Helen he proved to be a skilled, enthusiastic teacher of writing within his discipline. If Dr. Carter's approach did not promote a Murrayesque "discovery draft," his approach, as will be seen later, emphatically supported Stotsky's view that writing can play a crucial role in discovery prior to the first draft.

As for the students, Vijay argued that a critical-analysis essay for an English class required the same type of thinking that scientific writing required, with science's largely standardized format as the only significant difference, and David stated that it was "pretty obvious" that virtually all academic writing, whether in the sciences, the social sciences, or the humanities, involved the same process: formulating a hypothesis and then testing it. Helen, on the other hand, claimed that papers for other classes had not fully prepared her for writing the thesis: "In science there's evidence for everything, and you're limited to that evidence. You can't put personal opinions in. This thesis is kind of hard because I'm not used to writing scientifically."

All of these elements--the students' personalities and backgrounds, the views of their thesis advisors, and their situations as novice writers within the discourse communities of their academic disciplines--affected the students' research-paper processes, processes which this chapter will now examine.
The Research-Paper Processes

Topic Selection

Because Vijay and Helen, like virtually all science majors completing senior theses at the University, wrote theses centered on their work as laboratory assistants, in a sense they did not select their topics at all. Rather, their topics were selected for them by Dr. Carter and his research agenda. What the two students did choose, however, was to work as laboratory assistants for Dr. Carter rather than for one of the University’s other chemistry professors. Helen stated that she had chosen to work with Dr. Carter because she knew him better than she knew the others, having already taken three classes from him, because he gave instructions clearly and was willing to help, and because she was more interested in organic chemistry, Dr. Carter’s field, than in the other professors’ fields. Similarly, Vijay praised Dr. Carter’s mentoring style and writing style and expressed interest in Dr. Carter’s research areas.

Dr. Carter felt that his students benefited from his having selected the topics. “There’s no way an undergraduate or even a beginning graduate student in chemistry could come up with a meaningful research topic,” he said. “They don’t know what’s been done. They haven’t been fully trained and educated to be creative.” When told that most students in the humanities were largely responsible for selecting their own research-writing topics, he said,
That sounds like an enormous waste of time. If a student came to me and said, "Dr. Carter, I want to mix this solution with this other solution and see what happens," I’m not gonna spend five hours a week supervising stuff like that. No matter whether they wrote it up well or not, it’s junk.

While much composition theory and research argues in favor of giving students considerable latitude in topic selection (Murray 26, for example), the situation in this case is different. Student laboratory assistants are apprentices, and in this case the apprenticeship extends into the world of experimental-report writing. Moreover, while other parts of this study (especially Chapter Five) describe the disasters which can occur when students attempt to research topics about which they know virtually nothing, Vijay and Helen both spent many months in the laboratory gaining expertise in their subjects prior to the semesters in which they wrote their theses. During interviews, both Vijay and Helen described science majors as having an advantage over their fellow students when it came to writing senior theses, precisely because their experience as laboratory assistants provided them with focused topics and built-in familiarity with those topics. While composition theorists should not abandon composition’s emphasis on inventio, perhaps they have not sufficiently taken into account the fact that in some kinds of academic discourse, internal "invention" is largely irrelevant. James Berlin, for example, implicitly criticizes the research-paper assignment when he describes its genesis as resulting from "insistence in current-traditional rhetoric on
finding meaning outside the composing act, with writing itself serving as a simple transcription process" (70). If the research-paper assignment is intended as an initiation into academic discourse, surely it is significant that for Dr. Carter and his students, meaning emerged primarily in the laboratory, and the writings which most aided in the discovery of meaning were not the students’ senior thesis or Dr. Carter’s journal articles, but the laboratory notes the students and their teacher kept.

The lab-assistant approach to topic selection affected Vijay’s thesis far differently than it did Helen’s. Because of his ambitions to establish himself as a researcher, Vijay volunteered to begin working as a laboratory assistant far earlier in his academic career than did most chemistry majors at the University. He worked as Dr. Carter’s laboratory assistant during both semesters of his junior year and then worked full-time as lab assistant during the summer semester after his junior year. After these three semesters, he devoted his thesis time during the fall of his senior year to reading about related theory and research. The project on which he assisted was one on which Dr. Carter had been working for roughly five years, so that Vijay was involved with relatively fruitful experiments which in science often occur only after years of learning from mistakes. And the research topic—the chemical evolution of the citric acid cycle and its possible bearing on the origins of life—is of interest not
only to specialists, but to the educated public in general. In fact, a year or so after Vijay wrote his thesis, Dr. Carter appeared on the Cable News Network discussing this research—evidence that the research was not only significant but also accessible to a wide audience.

In contrast, Helen did not begin work as Dr. Carter’s laboratory assistant until the summer after her junior year, the usual time for a chemistry major at the University to begin such work, and her "wet chemistry" work (the actual lab work) was completed early in the fall semester of her senior year. Her project was one in which Dr. Carter was still conducting relatively preliminary investigations. In fact, the experiments to which she devoted her summer turned out to be largely a dead end, and it was not until December, months after Helen had ceased to work regularly in the laboratory, that mass spectroscopy data revealed what Helen called a "breakthrough" resulting from the early-fall experiments. Moreover, Helen’s research topic—esterification of a quinine derivative for possible increased antimalarial qualities—is less appealing to nonspecialists than is Vijay’s topic, while the experiments were so complicated that Helen herself had great difficulty understanding them. In fact, Helen described herself as struggling all summer to grasp the principles behind the research, after which the dead-end results forced her to change mental directions as she and Dr. Carter attempted a new approach. While Vijay spent the fall semester
reading about related theory and research to gain a broader perspective, Helen spent much of the same semester rereading her laboratory notebook and asking Dr. Carter questions, struggling simply to understand the experiments on which she had worked—only to be forced into still another mental shift by the "breakthrough" data at the end of the fall semester.

During his first interview, Vijay responded to the question "What will your thesis be about?" with a thirty-minute answer, complete with handouts he had used in a previous oral presentation—and I, with no college chemistry background whatsoever, understood his main points. In contrast, here is part of Helen's response to the same question during her first interview, with the ellipses representing pauses rather than missing words:

Okay, now I want to tell you about what we’ve been doing this past semester. It’s just, it’s new stuff, and I mean, I’m still . . . you know, it’s been a lot more, you know . . . it’s on my mind . . . I’m thinking about it all the time, but . . . I’m trying to understand it a little bit better, I do understand it, but to where I can explain it, it’s really hard.

Thus, besides being a superior student even when compared to other Honors Scholars, Vijay also enjoyed other advantages which Helen lacked: more laboratory time, more reading time, and more easily comprehensible research results to work with.

While Dr. Carter’s was virtually the only "voice" involved in Vijay’s and Helen’s topic-selection processes, various influences came into play in David’s selection of a topic. "In my classes, conflict is always what draws me like
a moth to a flame," David said during his first interview. So the martial-arts lover and reader of military books decided first of all that his thesis would deal with conflict.

Another influential voice in David's process was that of a famous "muckraking" novelist. While researching a paper for another course during his junior year, David happened onto Cheap and Contented Labor, Sinclair Lewis's nonfiction account of a North Carolina labor strike. Although the book turned out to be irrelevant for the paper he was writing at the time, David was fascinated by Lewis's account of a sheriff's fatal shooting of an unarmed, elderly striker:

For weeks after reading it, I would sit and draw pictures of a sheriff pointing a gun at an old man's head.¹ Now, I have no way of judging the accuracy of Lewis's account. I wasn't there. But that's not what's really important. The important thing is, it sensitized me to these people's condition. And from there, I just followed that pathway into the topic.

Another important influence was David's father, combined with David's interest in the effects of socioeconomic class on the individual, an interest shown in some of David's already-quoted statements. David's father, a second-generation labor organizer who had later become an administrator, rejected the concept of socioeconomic class as a factor in people's lives, arguing instead that the individual has almost unlimited free will and social mobility. Although David was not angry with his father--their disagreement was largely abstract and intellectual--he described his thesis as partly a rebuttal of his father's position.
With "conflict" narrowed to "class conflict as reflected in labor-management conflict," David sought to limit his topic in terms of time and place, very much the way Kari did in her paper discussed in Chapter Seven. Unlike Vijay and Helen, both of whom mentioned the benefits of gradually building expertise in their topics over months as laboratory assistants, David sought an area in which he would have virtually no background. Having written papers about almost all periods of American history except roughly the 1880's through the 1930's, he sought to work within that time period in order to fill a gap in his knowledge. Since prior knowledge of subject matter is a great aid in reading comprehension (Ramig 36-37), David was setting himself a challenging task. But given David's already-established love of challenges and of learning for its own sake, his choice should come as no surprise.

At this point, David asked Dr. Montgomery to chair his committee. Dr. Montgomery suggested that David find a historical event from labor-management relations in the town where the University was located and use that event as focal point for a discussion of broader historical trends and economic concepts. According to David, senior thesis advisors at the University routinely urge students to focus on a local event or issue. "I guess part of the function of this University is to elucidate truth about this region," he said. However, one of Dr. Montgomery's statements suggests a
different motivation:

These honors students all want to write a history of the Western world—or maybe the Eastern world, too. We try to narrow them down to something that’s doable, while still letting them deal with the kinds of things that excite them. I really see my job as to narrow, continually narrowing them down to the basic questions they want to deal with. I also expect from students at that level an overview of where their specific project fits into the larger picture.

To find a topic, David was to research local history until he could find an event to dramatize class struggle and labor-management conflict. "You’ve got to find a festering sore out there," David recalls Dr. Montgomery telling him. A book on local history mentioned major labor-management problems involving streetcar operators in 1917 and textile workers in 1934, so David began searching microfilmed copies of the 1917 edition of the local newspaper.

At his point, David made a mistake. Although the major strike of textile workers occurred in 1934, a smaller strike of textile workers occurred in 1917, about four months before the streetcar operators’ strike. During preliminary research, David photocopied newspaper pages from early in 1917, pages containing articles providing background information about local attitudes toward labor at the time. Among those stories were accounts of the beginnings of the 1917 textile workers’ strike. Then classes and other commitments forced David to put aside his thesis research for several days. By the time he returned to his research and looked at the photocopied pages, he had evidently forgotten that the major strike of
textile workers had occurred in 1934, not 1917, and he began
to research the 1917 textile workers' strike. Although he
realized his mistake within a few days,² he continued to
research the 1917 textile workers' strike, now intending to
compare it with the more dramatic 1934 textile workers'
strike. However, once he was committed to completing the
thesis during the summer semester rather than waiting for the
fall semester, David had no time to investigate the 1934
strike. Thus, he ended up writing exclusively about the
relatively minor 1917 strike.

If David could show how his specific project fit into a
larger picture, as Dr. Montgomery hoped, then even a minor
strike could be used to make major points. At one time during
his research, David said, "There were lots of other strikes at
about this time, but I'm focusing on the textile workers
because textiles have always been crucial to this region's
economy, so they're part of a microcosm of the whole labor-
management picture." After a pause, however, he added, "At
least, that's the official reason I gave. It is part of the
real reason, but another part is that this is the strike I
found information on first, and I don't have time to look for
the rest."

Whether freely selecting topics or having topics selected
for them, students must still form their own unique
representations of the writing task. This chapter now
examines the students' processes of task representation.
Task Representation

While Schwegler and Shamoon describe students as generally defining research papers as unoriginal, informative reports, all three Honors Scholars defined their tasks in the more ambitious ways Schwegler and Shamoon characterize as typifying professors' definitions of scholarly writing for academic journals.

For Vijay and Helen, this ambitious task representation resulted partly because Dr. Carter had selected their topics. Dr. Carter was conducting original research aimed at extending knowledge in his discipline and furthering an ongoing conversation in professional journals. In writing about this research, Vijay and Helen had little choice but to adopt Dr. Carter's research-writing goals and enter his discourse community.

Their experience as research assistants further assured that Vijay and Helen would adopt Dr. Carter's goals. Throughout the interviews, both students claimed partial ownership of the research on which they had assisted Dr. Carter, referring to it as "our research" and beginning sentences with "but then we discovered..." Vijay also frequently used the phrase "we scientists," and he pointed out with pride that he was listed as co-author of an article recently accepted by a chemical journal and that although Dr. Carter had written the article, Vijay had read it and offered wording suggestions, some of which had been incorporated into
the text. These research-assistant experiences helped Vijay and Helen to view themselves as part of a scientific community and to set their research-writing goals accordingly.

Nevertheless, the two did not adopt identical task representations. Helen stated that the most important part of the thesis, to her mind, was "just summarizing what we’ve done, what we concluded and how we approached it." To her, the fact that the research was original was sufficient to establish the significance of the senior thesis. Vijay, in contrast, was much more concerned with establishing the importance of the research by correlating it with previous theories and experiments. Since Vijay was repeatedly described as outstanding even among honors students, this difference in task representation may support the claims of Flower, Hayes, and their colleagues that highly competent students set more ambitious goals, involving a more complex rhetorical situation, than do their less skilled classmates. Vijay’s ambitious approach also demonstrates one other aspect of his task representation: he was determined to write a thesis which would distinguish him even from his fellow Honors Scholars, a thesis which ideally would earn the University’s award for the outstanding senior thesis.

Although David, as a humanities major, had to create his task representation almost from scratch, he, too, defined his task in terms of creating new knowledge and adding to disciplinary discourse. In this respect, he considered
himself lucky to have stumbled onto a smaller strike than the ones he originally had intended to research. "I've read probably all the books on local history that you could find in any library in town, and nobody has really examined the textile workers' 1917 strike," he said. "So I'm bringing new information to light, adding to the written record."

David was not content, however, merely to present new facts; he wanted to interpret as well. "I don't want to write just 'On June sixth, they did this,'" David said. "I want to write, 'On June sixth, they did this, and here's why.' It'll be almost an intellectual history of the city, of the different ideas floating around." More specifically, David wanted to write a leftist critique of class conflict, although he did not wholly accept Marxist interpretations. During our first interview, he said, "My purpose is to show that the system, capitalism and industrialism, created disharmony in society." Thus, he was influenced in his task representation not only by Dr. Montgomery, but also by a host of voices he had encountered in previous history and economics classes and texts.

David also defined his task partly by disagreeing with certain voices he had encountered:

What I'd like to do in my paper is explode some of the myths you see in the local history books. Some people may want to cover up the negative aspects, but really the South isn't just peaches and cream and Georgia beauties. I want to revise established thought. That's something that'll get you published.

This sense of the inadequacy of previous writing on a subject
is a standard characteristic of scholarly discourse and is even one of the standard "moves" John Swales has identified as standard in introductions to experimental reports (Bazerman 432-33). Also, in terms of the idea that the students’ task representations resembled those of professors, David’s concern with what is publishable speaks for itself.

One facet of task representation particularly important for novices writing for a new (to them) discourse community is the envisioning of an appropriate audience. This chapter now turns to the students’ constructions of audience.

Audience

Vijay and Helen faced a complicated task in constructing an audience. Both students were writing about research which normally would be published in chemical journals read exclusively by specialists who expected the concise style discussed earlier. But both were writing senior theses, a form which seems to imply a wider audience and a more expansive approach.

Vijay partly solved this problem by envisioning different readers for different parts of his thesis. His thesis begins by tracing through recorded history speculations regarding the origins of life, material Vijay described as accessible to the general reader. Then gradually, the thesis narrows to more specialized theory and research, appropriate for an increasingly specialized audience, so that by the time he discusses the experiments on which he assisted Dr. Carter,
Vijay's assumed audience has become readers of a chemical journal.

Although Helen was writing about research even more specialized than Vijay's, she repeatedly stated that her goal was to discuss the research in such a way that even a person without a chemistry background could understand it. She based this goal, somewhat paradoxically, on the fact that she, an honors student about to graduate with a chemistry major, had encountered great difficulty understanding the research. "It seems like if I can understand what I write, then anyone can," she said, laughing. "In fact, maybe I should just write how I thought through it. Maybe my way of writing it should be just the way I came to understand it." This view seems to invite the writer-based prose sometimes described as characteristic of unskilled writers. But as Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb have noted, even highly accomplished students often produce writer-based prose when placed in the position of novices in a new (to them) discourse community (104). Thus, Helen's reaction is not surprising.

David's assumed audience was a natural extension of his goal of exploding myths and revising established thought. "I try to imagine people taking a course in American Intellectual History and reading my thesis as a chapter in their textbook," he said. "I'd like an audience of readers who aren't afraid to read things that might challenge their beliefs and make them rethink their premises."
Hypothetical audiences aside, Vijay and Helen had already presented some of their thesis material before real, flesh-and-blood audiences. Each semester, all student research assistants in chemistry at the University were required to present a speech summarizing their semester’s research work, with the audience consisting mainly of other chemistry majors and the chemistry faculty. Thus, long before they began writing their theses, Vijay and Helen were being encouraged to envision a discourse community for their work and to begin thinking about what to say to that community. Vijay said of the speeches, "We get a sense of the scientific community that’s out there in the real world, and we realize that we have such a community here, even at this early stage." Helen said, "Because the department allows us to do these talks, I’ve been able to deal with my work, summarize it and organize it more than I would’ve otherwise." Later, Helen stated that when she began writing her first draft of the thesis, she reread her speeches and expanded on them. Vijay’s and Helen’s comments support Nelson and Hayes’s view that oral reports prior to a research paper’s deadline may encourage students to invest more of themselves in the research-paper task (18-21).

Of course, the students had to consider one other audience whose judgments would have profound consequences: their thesis committees. But while all three were acutely aware of their committee chairs (Dr. Carter and Dr. Montgomery) as audience, only Vijay showed much concern about
the committee as a whole while researching and writing. Helen and David did not ever select committees until near the end of their projects, after they had completed their research and written most or all of their first drafts. In part because of this eleventh-hour arrangement, Helen was unable to get any chemistry professors other than Dr. Carter onto her committee. David’s committee consisted mainly of history professors, along with one English professor.

In contrast, Vijay had already assembled his committee by the time of our first interview, almost three months before the committee would receive his thesis, and on at least one occasion he described the differing styles favored by various committee members. Despite his desire to make part of his thesis accessible to general readers, his committee consisted entirely of chemists, with the exception of one chemical engineer.

However, Vijay was also concerned with pleasing a less discipline-specific committee—the one which would determine who would receive the Kerrigan Award. He expressed some frustration that because this committee would represent a cross-section of the faculty, some committee members would find large portions of his thesis incomprehensible. Dr. Carter, who seemed almost as interested in the award as Vijay was, said:

Audience gets tricky for the students in science. Obviously, they can’t write it up for the historians on the committee. I always tell them to write it in the style and language of the discipline, write it
well, and organize it well. That way, the reader can at least see where we've been and where we're going. When I'm reading something in another specialty, even if it's something I don't understand, I can always tell whether it's well written or not.

Despite all his concern with external reward, however, Vijay described his ultimate audience as himself. After discussing his committees, he said, "In the end, I'm writing it to satisfy myself, not them. I don't want to read it years from now and say, 'I can't believe I wrote stuff this bad when I was in college.'"

In a sense, there is no split between writing for others and writing for oneself: as Donald Murray and others have pointed out, to revise well writers must distance themselves from their work and read it as if they had not written it themselves (68). Although he had never taken a college composition course and recalled scarcely any advice from his teachers about writing, Vijay at times sounded remarkably like a composition specialist:

Until these interviews, I've never really taken apart the way I go about writing. But what I think is happening is, when I'm thinking about a subject, I'm choosing a way to explain it to--myself. And myself is the educated listener. It's sort of talk, critique, talk, critique, talk, critique. It almost seems like there's a dichotomy in me. But I think it's helped me to improve, since I'm the one who's most critical of myself.

The final sentence in Vijay's statement brings up an interesting point about the students' sense of audience: in audience, as in task representation, the honors students seemed to seek challenge. David said of the committee that he
finally selected, "I chose people not because they'd make it easy for me to get honors, but because they were the best and they'd push me." Vijay expressed a similar sentiment: "I definitely hope that everyone on my committee is fairly strict." Whether the audience was hypothetical, a committee, or themselves, the students sought demanding readers.

The students were not only writing for discourse communities new to them; they were also writing more extended discourse than they had ever before attempted, and they were shaping that discourse to conform to a format within which they had never before written. This chapter now examines these matters.

Length and Format

Although the senior thesis carried no length requirement, all three students' theses were between 30 and 35 pages long, excluding acknowledgements, bibliographies, Vijay's and Helen's charts, and Vijay's preface. Other senior theses at the university have ranged from 9 to 121 pages, excluding bibliographies and appendices. Most fall in the 30-to-60-page range, with the median in the low 40's. Confirming Dr. Carter's point about style within disciplines, the shortest theses are almost invariably in the sciences, the longest ones tend to come from the social sciences, and those from the humanities tend to be medium-length. Thus, although all three students produced theses of almost identical length, Vijay's and Helen's might be considered relatively long for their
disciplines and David's relatively short for his.

Faced with the largest writing projects of their lives, the students might logically have sought security and refuge in the standardized forms for academic writing. In fact, however, the opposite was the case.

Although Vijay and Helen both accepted the need to adhere to the expected form for experimental reports, they both emphatically expressed the need to satisfy their individuality as well. Vijay said:

I'm not worrying about guidelines, about having to have a certain number of subheads or anything. Rather, I'm writing it so that it flows and sounds good to my ear, so that if I present it to someone, at least I can say, "I wrote this, and this is the way I wrote it," and not, "Well, I thought that you would like it this way."

Obviously, Vijay's insistence on the relative unimportance of guidelines ties in closely with his claim that his ultimate audience is himself.

Helen was even more emphatic about the need to find her own structure. When she had been preparing to write her thesis, Dr. Carter had urged her to use as a model the thesis written by Mary, his previous laboratory assistant on this particular series of experiments. Although Helen read Mary's thesis and found it a model of the conciseness Dr. Carter so admired, she added, "I wanted mine longer, and I wanted it to flow." At the end of our final interview, when asked if there was anything else she wanted to get on the record, she again discussed her refusal to pattern her thesis after Mary's;
finding her own way was important to Helen.

In discussing their goals, both Vijay and Helen mentioned "flow," a word many composition specialists regard as vague and clichéd when applied to prose style. However, Vijay and Helen both used the word in terms of a fairly specific problem: their need to establish overall continuity while working within a genre requiring headings and subheadings. During one early interview, Vijay noted that he expected his thesis to divide into nine major headings but then added, "But I don’t want it to sound like nine separate sections that I could’ve put in different places. Rather, they should be telling one story in a logical progression." In an interview after he had begun the first draft, he also noted with pride that he had ended his first section, dealing with speculations regarding the origins of life, with:

In addition, the field began to diversify, giving birth to new pathways of understanding the origin of life. One such pathway is the origin of metabolism.

and had begun his second section, dealing with origins of the citric acid cycle, with:

Of all major metabolic pathways, the citric acid cycle . . . is one of the most crucial . . . .
The metabolism/metabolic echo is like an example from a composition textbook’s discussion of transitions.

Similarly, Helen said that she had refused to model her thesis on that of her predecessor, Mary, partly because Mary had used a separate subhead for each experiment, with no attempt at linkage. Helen said, "She just wrote, ‘We did
this. [pause] Then we did this.’ I want something more like, 'Because we got this result in our first experiment, we decided that our next experiment should'--that kind of thing.' Viewed in this light, Helen’s earlier-quoted statement about wanting her thesis to explain her own thought processes may reflect not writer-based prose with its ignoring of audience, but rather a desire for cohesiveness and clarity, rooted in concern for an audience.

Like Vijay, Helen also wanted her subheaded material to form a logical progression. Again, this concern reflected her sense of audience and led her to reject the idea of imitating Mary’s thesis:

Mary put the Experimental section first and then the Results and Discussion. But in journal articles I’ve seen, it’s the other way around. And I like the other way better, because when you read, you’re gonna be more concerned with what happened, with the results. And then if you want to know a little more about how the researchers got those results, you can always look that up later.

Helen’s comment supports Flower and Hayes’s findings that competent students use their sense of the rhetorical situation inherent in the assignment to help them plan their discourse (30).

David’s rebellion against format restrictions was quieter but, perhaps, more dramatic. Having been exempt from all ordinarily required college-level classes featuring instruction in generic or discipline-specific research writing, he entered the project genuinely unaware of certain matters of form relevant to his thesis. As will be discussed
later, this lack of awareness created problems for him.

Critical to the success of any student's research writing is that student's ability to find, organize, and synthesize information. This chapter now examines the students' information-gathering and information-handling strategies.

Finding Information

The three students' research experiences exemplify Richard Larson's conclusion that different disciplines conduct their research in dramatically different ways and that composition teachers' approach to the "generic research paper" tends to overemphasize the primacy of library search skills (815-16).

For Vijay and Helen, the most important research took place in the laboratory, not in the library. Thus, Dr. Carter played a far more prominent role in his students' research processes than would be possible for any advisor working with students in the humanities. Vijay, Helen, and Dr. Carter all described a progression in which the students began as rather bewildered observers to whom Dr. Carter explained laboratory procedures as he worked. Gradually, the students assumed increasing responsibility until, with the exception of brief daily conferences with Dr. Carter, they conducted research unsupervised. After describing this progression, Dr. Carter said,

Some professors just turn their students loose in the lab from day one and let them make tons of mistakes, then explain to them what they did wrong. That seems to me to waste a lot of valuable
equipment and time. My research time is so limited that I need maximum efficiency, and that’s what my method provides.

One can see a connection between Dr. Carter’s thinking here and his conviction that he, not the students, should select research topics.

Vijay and Helen both seemed to approve of Dr. Carter’s relatively close mentoring style. As Vijay said, "It wasn’t like the lab research in my earlier chemistry classes. Here, if you break a bottle with a solution in it, you’ve destroyed perhaps five years of work." Helen expressed similar sentiments.

Along with the physical progression toward responsibility for the "wet chemistry," the students also described a mental progression. Helen portrayed herself as moving from blindly obeying orders to gradually understanding why she was to perform a certain procedure. She added, however, that she never grasped the research fully enough to know what alternative procedures might have been possible. Vijay, in contrast, seemed to have grasped the reasoning behind the procedures more quickly, to the point where he himself wrote the proposal which provided grant money allowing him to work full-time for Dr. Carter in the summer. By that summer, Vijay stated, he understood the research well enough to occasionally suggest to Dr. Carter the direction upcoming experiments should take.
Thus, the laboratory experience was crucial to the two students’ grasp of their subjects, with print sources largely supplementary, providing background information and material for the theses’ literature-review introductions. Moreover, when the two students did need to research printed materials, Dr. Carter’s collection was at least as important to them as was the library. Dr. Carter had already collected the relevant literature on Vijay’s and Helen’s topics—a predictable occurrence, since these topics were Dr. Carter’s research agenda and he had already begun preparing journal articles and conference papers on them.

Dr. Carter stated that his laboratory assistants do not always receive such help. "A lot of times I’ll send a student to the library and tell him to search back fifty years for articles on a certain topic," he said. "But in this case, when they joined the project, I pretty much had things up to date in the literature."

According to Cindy Lewis, a librarian briefly discussed in Chapter Five of this study, the help Vijay and Helen received is not uncommon for advanced students working within their specialties. When she had been librarian for the Latin American Studies collection at a prestigious university, the students she encountered were rarely conducting a general search. "They were almost always looking for specific sources that their mentors had told them about," she said. "And that’s how it was for me in college, too. I never even had to
use the Reader's Guide until I was in grad school. All my papers were from the mentor approach." Similarly, Dr. Montgomery stated that for most history-major research papers, as opposed to senior theses, he expected students only to show familiarity with "the major works in that specific field," adding that he would tell the students what those major works were. If such practices are standard in upper-division courses, then perhaps First-Year Composition research papers should be taught, if at all, largely in terms of getting students to evaluate critically a few important texts within a given field, rather than, as is now the usual case, requiring students to cite a certain minimum number of sources, regardless of their quality.

In any event, Helen relied almost exclusively on Dr. Carter for print sources, going beyond his collection only to examine the "quinine" sections of three or four library books about alkaloids. In fact, her most important reading was of her own laboratory notebooks as she struggled to understand the experiments on which she had worked and the logic behind them. With more time for reading and with a more ambitious task representation than Helen possessed, Vijay used Dr. Carter's sources but also went considerably beyond them. Beginning a semester before he would actually write the thesis, he looked for sources not only in the University's library, but in the libraries of three universities with Ph.D. programs in chemistry, each of the three located roughly 100
miles from the University Vijay attended.

In contrast, David's research methods closely resembled the research procedures described in most composition textbooks—library-centered and moving from general to specific. Dr. Montgomery had suggested to David a research strategy clearly designed to facilitate the goal of writing about a narrow topic but providing an overview of how that specific project fits into the big picture. David was to begin by reading rapidly, preferably without slowing down to take notes, a variety of works about economics, labor-management relations, and the region's economic history. "He wants me to be able to sound like I was an expert in the first place," David said. Also in the early stages of research, David was to consult works about local history to find the "fester sore," the local incident demonstrating labor-management conflict. Finally, he was to research that particular incident through old newspapers and other local-history sources. Eventually, David's library search took him to the University library, the regional history collection in the city's public library, and the city's regional history museum.

David proved sophisticated, if somewhat unorthodox, in his methods of locating and evaluating sources. At first, he rarely employed the University library's computerized card catalog. Having worked in the library part-time through most of his college years, he already knew the Library of Congress
numbers for the general subject areas in which he sought information. Thus, he would simply walk to either the history section or the economics section, find a shelf he had not yet covered, and examine the books one by one. He examined tables of contents more carefully than indexes at this point because, he said, he sought overall theoretical background rather than specific data. "Right now I’m looking for critiques of capitalism, both pro and con," he said during our first interview. When I observed him as he sought sources one day, he read out a few key terms from a book’s table of contents and declared, "This one’s middle-of-the-road leftist, not too far left." If still undecided about whether or not a book was potentially useful, he would skim the book, often reading the first few pages of chapters to determine the author’s approach. In source selection, then, David employed the rhetorical reading strategies which Flower, Haas, and Kantz all portray as characteristic of competent students.

As he began to narrow his focus, David became somewhat more conventional in his procedures. He relied on the computerized card catalog more, both to find the Library of Congress numbers for the more specific topics on which he now sought information and to determine whether or not all the library’s holdings on a given topic were available. As he concentrated more on books about the South, he relied more on the books’ indexes, looking under "Manufacturing" and under the name of the city where the 1917 strike occurred.
For the strike itself, David relied primarily on microfilmed copies of local newspapers from 1917, supplemented by sources such as the 1917 city directory, unpublished papers collected by the regional history museum, and clippings from the files of the public library's regional history collection. Since no index existed for the local newspaper, he had to examine each day's paper, page by page, for the weeks in which the strike took place, slow, tedious work, especially because the microfilm viewers which could scan pages could not make photocopies, and the microfilm viewers which could make photocopies could not scan pages. Thus, David had to view the newspapers on the scanning machine, taking notes as to dates, page numbers, and headlines for relevant stories, then find the same material on the other machine and make photocopies. The arduous nature of this process may well have contributed to David's stumbling into writing about the "wrong" strike, both because the mind-numbing nature of the work increased the likelihood of mental error and because the tedium increased David's willingness to work with whatever strike-related material he could locate first.

David sought to enliven both his own research experience and his thesis by supplementing his library research with interview research. Originally, he had hoped to interview participants in the events about which he wrote, but when time limitations forced him to limit himself to the 1917 strike rather than comparing that strike to the one in 1934, he
conceded that he would not be able to find surviving participants. Calls to the national office of the American Textile Workers' Union, seeking interviews or access to archives, and a call to a local labor lawyer also failed to yield useful information. Thus, David in the end relied exclusively on print sources.

Reading

Helen provided very little information about her reading process, largely because she read relatively few sources, and those only very later in her process of completing the assignment. However, abundant data from Vijay and David confirm what reading theorists have long argued: that skilled academic readers (and writers) are active readers, sensitive to the rhetorical situation of the author whose work they have read, correlating what they read with concepts they have previously encountered, and planning how they may incorporate the ideas and information they encounter into their writing. As the last item in the previous sentence suggests, Vijay and David also read in such a way as to assure that when they wrote their theses, to paraphrase Bakhtin, their intentions would dominate rather than being dominated by the voices encountered in their sources, so that the thesis would form a "compact, unequivocal whole" (Titunik 198).

During the earlier part of the Spring 1990 semester, Vijay had scheduled himself two four-hour blocks per week to work on his thesis, with those blocks devoted to reading
sources and writing his literature-review introduction. Our first few interviews took place during those sessions, usually as a one-hour break for Vijay after he had read sources for two hours and before he read for another hour. Thus, his reading was fresh on his mind during the interviews. Without even being asked about his reading, Vijay would describe in depth the rhetorical situations behind his sources. He was aware of the works’ assumed audiences:

This book is for anyone. It just requires a high school biology and chemistry background.

This one is more systematic, whereas Oparin’s other book was written perhaps for nonspecialists and presents his initial views on the subject.

He was aware of relationship between style and ideas:

At the end of every chapter there’s a little excerpt from a Sherlock Holmes story, and then he relates that excerpt to the ideas in the chapter. So he’s examining the origin of life as a mystery.

He was aware of the relationships among the author’s background, the author’s rhetorical strategy, and the source’s potential usefulness:

By training he’s an astrophysicist, not a specialist in this area. So as a nonspecialist, he has summarized the views of other scientists and assimilated his own view, which makes the book extremely helpful to me.

Most of all, he was aware of the relationship of the sources he was reading to the experiments on which he had worked:

A lot of these books take the work done by basic scientists like Dr. Carter and me, draw that work together with other scientists’ work into a greater scheme, and use it all to speculate about how life originated.
In Bakhtinian terms, then, Vijay recognized that while his sources incorporated the voices of many scientists, the authors’ intentions dominated, since the various voices were used to support the authors’ views regarding the origins of life. Reciprocally, Vijay read with an eye toward demonstrating how the experiments on which he had assisted Dr. Carter correlated with his sources’ theories. Thus, his own intention—to establish the importance of Dr. Carter’s and his experiments within a body of research and theory—would dominate over the voices of not only the authors he was reading, but the voices of sources they had used. After describing an article by Howard Gest, Vijay said, "Yesterday it hit me how well our work fits in with Gest’s hypothesis. That’s the sort of thing I want to bring out in my thesis, the speculations and work done by others and how nicely our work fits into the progression."

David, too, intended to use theoretical sources to establish the significance of his specific topic—in Dr. Montgomery’s terms, to correlate his specific project with the big picture. After describing certain conditions underlying the 1917 textile workers’ strike, David said:

> It was a beautiful example of what I’d been learning in my American Intellectual and Social History class. Not beautiful in the sense that I’m so glad people had all these problems. Just that my theory turned out to be right on the mark, so that you could take this event and generalize from it.

David and Vijay express almost identical ideas in the above quotations. But while Vijay consistently seemed
interested in confirming previous theory and research, David, with his goal of making readers reevaluate their ideas, was often more interested in contradicting the voices he encountered in his reading. In an interview shortly after he had begun writing his first draft, David predicted that his thesis’s "angle" would be that the 1917 strike disproved two assumptions he claimed were found in most published discussions of labor-management relations in the region: that management had consistently bowed to labor’s demands during World War I in order to keep production high and that labor-management relations in the region had not become violent until the 1920’s.

While the above example finds David contradicting what he claimed were accepted scholarly views, more often his "debunking urge" was directed against the rosy pictures painted by chamber-of-commerce-type histories. Paging through photocopies of sources, he said, "Once in a while I’ll come across a clipping like this one, something that’ll say, ‘Serious labor problems in [the city] are a thing unknown.’ And I’ll go ‘HA! HA! HA!’"

During a 2 1/2-hour session in which I observed David and audiotaped him as he voiced his thoughts while reading strike-related articles from the 1917 newspapers, he tended to debunk the voices he encountered within any given article, especially those expressing anti-union views, by arguing that their ideas did not fit with data from outside the article. At the same
time, he tended to confirm voices of theorists he had encountered outside the articles, arguing that their ideas did fit with data from within the articles.

An example of David's debunking of ideas within an article by comparing them with outside data occurred as David read an article covering a speech by Thomas Edwards, the president of the state's manufacturing association. "The guy says, 'Wages are as good here as they are anywhere else in the nation,'" David read. "I think I can empirically prove that's false." Similarly, when he read an editorial writer's claim that "The labor of [the city] has always up to this time been loyal to the city," David said, "I remember reading in a local history book that there was labor trouble in 1916, if not before that. This writer is covering up quite a bit--ignoring history, really."

David sometimes debunked views by comparing them with broader economic theory: "This guy says that the employees 'can do themselves and their country no greater injustice than to be exploited by labor agitators.' But from a Marxist standpoint, the employers are the exploiters."

David also at times debunked a voice from within one 1917 article by comparing its claims with data from another 1917 article. After reading a company owner's claim that "until an out-of-town organizer came along," mill employees had been "cheered and happy, and showed no sign of being disheartened over the amount that they made," David pointed out that
according to another article, 1,950 local workers had joined the union within a space of eight days. From this, David argued that if the workers had seemed content, it was because of what he called "lack of an opposing paradigm," so that when the labor organizers began voicing previously unspoken grievances, they received instant support.

David was also capable of more visceral disagreement, without recourse to outside data. Reading manufacturing-association-president Edwards's speech, David said, "It's rhetoric like this that just makes me sick. 'The employer, as a rule, is the very best friend his employees have.' Bullshit."

On those occasions when the newspaper articles provided data which seemed to confirm concepts David had encountered in his readings of broader theory, he reacted with pleased excitement. "This is incredible! This could be beautiful," he said of encountering an article which stated that the workers were no longer asking for higher wages or shorter hours, only for the right to unionize, yet the owners would not accept these terms. The article pleased him because he viewed it as supporting a leftist critique of capitalism he had read, a critique which stated that capitalists' main goal was not achieving financial prosperity but maintaining "capitalist hegemony" and that unionization was therefore a more serious threat than financial setbacks. Similarly, he smiled and said "This is important" when an article seemed to
support a published theory that strikers in small towns are likelier to receive the community's sympathy than are strikers in large cities.

Correlating the specific event with broader theory was not the only way that David sought to impose his own intentions on the voices he encountered in his reading; he also sought to find any other evidence which would demonstrate the significance of the 1917 strike. Because the subject was a smaller strike than the one David had originally intended to research, establishing its significance was crucial. In the 2 1/2 hours in which I observed him reading, David reacted with the most excitement when he read an article in which a member of management claimed that the textile workers' strike would determine whether or not the city as a whole would be predominately unionized in the future. "So this was the watershed," he said. "That's all I needed to justify this paper, to justify why just 1917."

David also sought to establish the strike's significance through accounts of strike-related violence, accounts which could bring the thesis back to David's original purpose of writing about conflict. Besides his reaction to the "watershed" statement, another moment when David showed excitement during the reading session I observed was when he examined a headline and said, "Ha-ha! Bingo! This is what I was looking for. 'Young Man Shot By Alleged Strikebreaker.' We may have something very big here."
David could further establish the strike’s significance if he could demonstrate conflict between socioeconomic classes, thus again bringing the thesis back to his original intentions. While reading an article about a declaration of mutual support signed by the city’s major factory owners, David said, "Man, this is great! Class warfare--I mean, class identity." Despite his intense dislike of many ideas in Edwards’s speech, David said after reading the article about the speech:

It’s an excellent article--not in the sense that I like what the guy’s saying, but because it’s useful information. He’s revealing the manufacturers’ position. And that helps to illuminate the relationship that existed between the manufacturers and the workers--how they’re coming at it from two different worlds.

David’s sophistication as a researcher is demonstrated by this willingness to recognize even voices with which he disagrees as "excellent" because they are "useful." In contrast, the community college librarians quoted in Chapter Five stated that less competent students tend to look for (or often, tend to demand that the librarians find for them) sources which will eloquently state what the students already believe. While one could discuss this contrast in terms of broad-mindedness and tolerance of other views, it might be more useful to consider it in Bakhtinian terms. Perhaps the less competent students perceive their authorial voices as being so fragile that to incorporate strong voices expressing opposing views might endanger the force and unity of their
discourses, as with Walter's essay, discussed in Chapter Four. But for students like David, more confident of their ability to let their own intentions dominate their writing, clear statements of opposing views help to clarify the positions and the issues involved, thus setting the stage for them to express their own views.

This confidence may free competent students to incorporate voices which less competent students might view as simply irrelevant. Velma, discussed in Chapter Six, a student who was taking a First-Year Composition class for the second time in order to eliminate a low grade from her GPA, commented on the outdated fashions in clothing and automobiles she encountered in the mid-1960's issues of news magazines she was using in her research, and then described herself as having what she portrayed as a bad habit of getting distracted during research. But when David encountered similarly "quaint" material in the 1917 newspapers, he viewed it as a potential resource:

You can see what a class-conscious society it was then. The paper has lots of little announcements for dances and balls, lots of little articles that say, "This young man is now home from school and will soon be travelling to blank." Some of it is silly--balls where the women's gowns had to be designed in a patriotic theme, stuff like that. I want to photocopy a few of those pages and use them in the paper for an angle--"In a society in which the wealthy could blah, blah, blah, those less fortunate were struggling for"--that kind of thing.

This quotation demonstrates not only David's willingness to incorporate a wide variety of voices into his discourse, but
also his ability to envision, while reading, ways a source's voice might be incorporated in his own text. Similarly, while reading manufacturing-association-president Edwards's speech, David said, "Some of these are gonna make great quotes right at the beginning—you know, centered on the page, after the title and before the regular text begins." Again, we see David's confidence that his intentions will unify a discourse relying on many voices, as well as his ability to transform mentally the material he is reading into potential evidence within his own text. David envisions not only privileging a voice with which he disagrees but also taking Edwards's words, which were sincere in the original speech and in the newspaper article, and using them ironically within the thesis.

When David, in the long session, envisioned specific contexts in his thesis for material he had just read, he consistently sought ways to emphasize a particular fact or quotation. For example, after reading the material which elicited his "watershed" statement, he began thinking of possible titles for his thesis, titles involving the words "1917," "union," and "watershed." He also said, "This 'watershed' thing will help me set up the conclusion." After reading that a union meeting took place in a Presbyterian church, he said, "I could write something like 'It is possible that certain Christian groups in town supported the workers, as seen by the fact that they were allowed to hold their meetings in a church.'"
David used his sources not only to plan parts of the thesis but also to plan his upcoming research. As he read the articles, he kept a list of the key persons on both sides of the strike so that he could later go to the regional history section of the public library and seek biographical information about these people—especially information suggesting divisions along class lines, such as that all laborers lived in the same part of town or that all owners were members of the same private club. When one article discussed a call for repeal of a particular ordinance, but subsequent articles did not mention the ordinance, David said, "I'll have to go down to the courthouse and see if they actually repealed it." In a later interview, David stated that the day after he finished reading the last of the 1917 newspaper articles, he returned to the public library's regional history files, seeking support for the "watershed" angle and finding a 1938 article from a local labor newspaper stating that the 1917 strike resulted in "thousands of workers signing union cards for the first time."

We have seen that when reading the brief newspaper articles, David at times speculated about ways he would conduct future research or use material in his thesis. When reading longer material, David also speculated about what his source was about to say. In an early interview, discussing a book he had not yet finished reading, David described how the first part of the book established that "the South's landed
gentry simply moved over to industrial ownership," and then said, "I think later in the book, he's gonna portray the rags-to-riches people, the area's *nouveaux riches*, as the cause of many of this region's problems." This tendency to speculate is illustrative of the rhetorical reading strategies adopted by skilled readers.

One more point remains to be explored about David's thoughts as he read. Although David obviously brought strong pro-labor views to his reading, he mentally struggled over the extent to which his thesis should reflect a left-wing economic perspective. To some extent his concern was pragmatic and audience-centered: he pointed out, for example, that he had been told to revise his thesis proposal to eliminate Marxist terms such as "bourgeoisie." Ultimately, however, he saw the issue in terms of personal conviction. He did not embrace Marxism, and he believed that America does provide opportunity for social mobility, even if that opportunity is limited in many ways. He also noted that industrial capital has provided many fine things, including the endowment for the University's Honors Scholars program, an endowment from which he benefited. Thus, within him were both a leftist voice intent on debunking portrayals of Southern industrial capitalism as harmonious and a more conservative voice defending established institutions and noting that capitalists had no monopoly on corruption.

This more conservative voice made itself heard at times during the session in which I observed David as he read the
newspaper articles. After reading a pro-management editorial's claim that "There are people in this community who thrive most on fomenting discord and creating trouble," he said, "That could be true. Some people do consider themselves professional revolutionaries." Later, writing the word "exploited" in his notes, David said, "That's an overused word." When reading an article about complaints of media bias, David said, "When the union people claimed the newspapers were being unfair in their coverage, the newspapers printed their complaints, which is the fair thing to do. I think overall, the newspapers treated the strikers fairly."

Finally, when reading of a fine levied against a union organizer, he said, "I wonder how much his salary was? But then, besides his salary, I’ll bet he was skimming a lot off the top from union dues."

In one sense this admixture of perspectives seems beneficial, since ideally researchers should not approach their sources with minds made up in advance. But David's political uncertainty may have been symptomatic of a more ominous vagueness regarding what the thesis's controlling purpose should be. As the past few pages make clear, David's reading process seemed loaded with little epiphanies--but the epiphanies were little, and separate, with no one epiphany related to any other in any way but an additive one: "Here's another reason that the 1917 strike was significant."
Granted, I observed David reading the articles on June 20, when he still had over six weeks before his August 4 deadline for turning in his thesis to the committee. From another perspective, however, by June 20 David had been researching his thesis for over five months and was more than 80 percent of the way through the two semesters’ time he would spend on the thesis. It was drawing late for David to be still casting about for a central idea. Moreover, during an interview in late May, David had speculated about what his thesis’s focus would be, and the ideas he discussed at that time were not ideas he even mentioned during the reading session in June. When David was interviewed again in early July, at which time he had begun writing his first draft, the points he described as important only partly coincided with those he had stressed on June 20. Given Stotsky’s statement that students who do not find a controlling idea during research prior to beginning a rough draft often report "extreme difficulties in writing their papers" ("On Planning" 51), it would appear that, despite the formidable sophistication he brought to the act of reading his sources, David was headed for trouble.

**Taking Notes**

Just as the students’ researching processes demonstrate how widely different disciplines’ research practices may vary from the approach taught in most composition classes, so their notetaking practices also demonstrate wide variance from the
practices generally taught in composition classes, both because of academic discipline and personal style.

If Helen ever took any notes from published sources, she never mentioned doing so and never showed me the notes. But she did show me four notebook pages' worth of notes she had taken from rereading her laboratory notebooks, and she emphatically stressed how much she had learned both from writing those laboratory notebooks and from rereading them.

At the end of each day during their months as laboratory assistants, Vijay and Helen had been required to summarize the day's work in their laboratory notebooks. It was here, perhaps even more than in working with drafts of the thesis, that Dr. Carter taught Helen the art of scientific writing. "The notebook entries have to be clear and precise," he said, echoing words he used to describe his preferred style for articles in science journals. "I kept telling her, 'We're gonna have to read this two years from now and be able to tell from it exactly what we did.'"

In part because of Helen's struggles to understand the experiments on which she was working, she at first found writing the journal entries to be extremely difficult. During Helen's first weeks as a laboratory assistant, Dr. Carter would sometimes simply rewrite parts of her laboratory entries and tape his version over hers. "When she first began, I'd read her entries and very often say to her, 'But that's not what we did,'" Dr. Carter said. Helen said largely the same
thing, but then added,

But over the summer he kept showing me how to write, until I finally started to get better at it. Then when I was writing the thesis, it was like I could hear Dr. Carter's voice in my head. I'm starting to think like he writes.

It is difficult to imagine a clearer example of how discipline-specific writing instruction can be inextricably bound with a discipline's concepts and of a student writer being socialized successfully to particular disciplinary norms. It is even more difficult to imagine a clearer example of Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia*.

When Helen took notes on her own laboratory notebooks, she mainly wrote summaries of what she and Dr. Carter had done, then added in the margins explanations of why they had done it. This approach surely correlates with her already-discussed goal of producing an account of her own growing comprehension of the research. It also supports Stotsky's point that pre-first-draft writings are not only evidence of the writer's prior thought but also an aid to the writer's subsequent thought ("On Planning" 49). However, Helen said of this rereading of the notebooks, "I would go over to Dr. Carter's office, and we would go over the lab books together," suggesting that Helen still needed Dr. Carter's help in understanding the experiments. So during the semester in which Vijay was reading about related theories and research and mentally correlating those theories and that research with the work on which he had assisted Dr. Carter, Helen was still
struggling to grasp the reasoning behind the laboratory work itself.

Although he, too, had recorded his work in laboratory notebooks, and had done so for more semesters than Helen had, at no time during his interviews did Vijay mention the notebooks. If the notebooks aided him at all, it was in helping him to internalize his understanding so that he would not have to reread them. During early interviews, he repeatedly said that he expected his account of the experiments on which he had assisted Dr. Carter to be the easiest part of the thesis to write, on one occasion saying, "I know what happened in the lab like I know the back of my hand," he added. Rather than the notebooks, Vijay’s reading was of other researchers and theorists.

When reading sources for the thesis, Vijay usually took brief notes on notebook paper. Then, immediately or almost immediately after having finished reading a source, he would write his first draft of the segment of the thesis that involved that source. Most of Vijay’s published sources would be used in the thesis’s introduction as part of a chronological overview of related theory and research. Because of the chronological nature of his review of literature, Vijay for the most part discussed each source separately, making connections only through the transitions he so highly prized. Thus, he was able to take this "modular" approach to his sources rather than having to store data on
note cards and organize those note cards later by subtopics.

It is interesting to note Vijay claimed that he would not have used the traditional note-card approach regardless of the assignment. He had tried using note cards only once, when his tenth-grade English teacher had demanded cards along with a research paper, and had found that he often ran out of room on the card without having written all that he wanted to about a given idea. Since Vijay's handwriting is not particularly large, it seems likely that he simply prefers to write in relatively large chunks, perhaps one chunk per source.

David, whose task did demand synthesis of ideas according to subtopics, not only had no use for note cards but also little use for notes themselves. "On other papers, when I look back at the notes I've taken, they don't make any sense to me," he said. "So I usually just don't take any. I keep my notes up here." And he pointed to his head.

During the early part of his research, when he was reading a variety of works for general background, David usually bookmarked key pages as he read, then photocopied those pages. "Dr. Montgomery says, 'When in doubt, spend a dime,'" David said. But David spent considerably more than a dime on photocopies: in the Budweiser box that held all the documents related to David's thesis were photocopies of over 800 pages from approximately forty sources other than newspapers--mostly from books or journal articles but occasionally from unpublished papers. David had underlined or
highlighted passages from 118 of the 844 pages. However, he had written notes in the margins of only nineteen pages of text and on the photocopied title pages of six works, with most of his notes only two or three words long. Only two pages contained notes exceeding seven words long. He had also underlined passages from ten pages of text.

Evidently this system of massive reading and photocopying, combined with extremely sparing notetaking, suited David well. During an interview near the end of the background-reading phase of his research, he said, "If I’d been taking notes, I’d have read only a third as many books by now, and I’d be sick of it because I was going so slow. This way, I’ve read much more, I know much more, and I feel better about the project."

David’s Budweiser box also contained photocopies of 110 newspaper articles from 1917, each with a number on the back to establish the chronological sequence. Probably because these articles describe the events at the heart of his thesis, David marked and annotated these pages more extensively than the photocopied pages of background reading. Eighty-seven of the 110 articles contain highlighted or underlined passages, and 105 of the 110 have comments written on the back of the page, averaging just under three comments per article. Over 85 percent of the comments simply summarize an article’s main point ("stabbing of unioner by nonunioner") or a point within the article ("meeting at Presbyterian church"). The other
comments include questions and suggestions for further research ("call for removal of ordinance barring food peddlers--go to courthouse to determine [sic] if repealed"); quotations and suggestions for using those quotations ("better to starve striking than working 11 hours a day making $ for others--great quote for beginning of paper"); correlations with other sources ("claims grocers helping labor agitators--see thesis on small town labor relations & sympathy of townsfolk"); and evaluations of the relative significance of a particular article ("nothing new," "!!!significant: determine whether union or non-union city!"). Most of these comments are about five words long.

In summary, then, whatever voices influenced the composing processes of these three students, voices advocating the conventional note-card approach were not among them.

According to both Kuhlthau and Stotsky, a research paper's focus ideally should emerge during the student's search process, prior to the time that the student begins the first draft. Thus, while the students were performing the reading and notetaking discussed in the last few pages, they ideally should have been heading toward the formulation of a focus for their theses.

Plans and Outlines

Nowhere was Dr. Carter's close supervisory style so apparent as in his attitude toward his students' plans for their theses. While Vijay and Helen were preparing to write
their theses, Dr. Carter presented a convention speech dealing with the research on which Vijay had assisted him and helped Helen apply to present a paper at an international student conference by writing the proposal for her. He then gave Vijay a copy of his outline for the speech and Helen a copy of the proposal, telling both that these items could serve as rough outlines for their theses.

One might argue that Dr. Carter was allowing his students to evade tasks intended for them, perhaps encouraging them to become like Larry, the student discussed in Chapter Five who relied on his teacher and his school’s librarians to select his topic, find his sources, and structure his paper. This was not at all the case. Larry sought, in fact almost demanded, all this help to complete a five-page, four-source research paper. Vijay and Helen, on the other hand, were writing senior theses after months of work helping Dr. Carter, work which at larger state universities would have been performed exclusively by graduate students. As Dr. Carter put it,

This isn’t some little lab exercise for Intro to Chem. This is real research, and it’s almost too hard for even the best undergraduates. So I don’t feel at all guilty about the help I’m giving them, and they shouldn’t feel guilty about the help they’re getting.

Moreover, while Larry largely sought help as a substitute for making an effort, Vijay and Helen tried to do as much as possible on their own. Both took pride in their eventual ability to work in the laboratory with relatively little
supervision, and despite his frequent offers of conferences, both sought out Dr. Carter less during the semester in which they wrote the thesis than they had during previous semesters. "We’re not as close as we were before, but that’s how it should be," Vijay said. "All this time he put a lot into me, and now it’s time to stand and deliver." Helen concurred, saying, "In the summer I saw him every day, and in the fall I’d go to see him two or three times a week. But now it’s like, I know what I have to do, it’s me doing it, and I have to do it myself." In fact, Helen chose not to follow Dr. Carter’s advice to use the proposal as a rough outline. "It’s in my head," she said when asked about an outline. "I know what I’m going to do."

Interestingly, in a later statement, Helen suggested that she avoided outlines because she preferred not knowing what she was going to do:

I don’t like to make an outline because I’m afraid I might feel stuck to it. I want to be free to change, because when you write, you realize there are some things you want to add that you hadn’t thought of before, more important than what you had in mind at first. And when I do try to start with a kind of outline, in the end it’s nothing like what I decided to write. I mean nothing, because I added things and moved other things around.

Although Helen’s statement appears to contradict itself somewhat as to whether or not outlines inhibit her from changing her plans, it nevertheless reveals her faith in writing as a process of discovery, even when the writing is an experimental report. Indeed, perhaps another reason she
avoided making an outline was that the experimental-report form already provided more preset structure than she wanted.

Although Vijay surely needed Dr. Carter's help less than Helen did, he was happy to use the outline from Dr. Carter's speech. During our first interview, more than a month before he had to produce a complete first draft for Dr. Carter, Vijay already had written the following outline, one he described as an "elaborated and fleshed out" version of the speech outline:

I. Speculations Regarding Origins of Life  
II. Origins of Metabolism  
III. The Citric Acid Cycle  
IV. Origins of the Citric Acid Cycle  
V. Ponnampura's Experiments  
VI. Our Work--Experimental Approach  
VII. Our Work--Procedures  
VIII. Our Work--Results and Discussion  
IX. Conclusions

This initial outline closely resembles the table of contents for Vijay's completed thesis, except that the thesis also contains a preface. By our second interview, a week after the first, Vijay had decided on the only structural change the outline underwent. He decided that since the citric acid cycle is one of the prime metabolic cycles, sections II, III, and IV should be combined into one section. The influence of the outline on Vijay's decisions supports Stotsky's view that written plans, by allowing writers to see their ideas, aid in further planning ("On Planning" 49). Even with this change, however, Vijay was still covering the same material in the same order.
Although Vijay's outline includes only major topics, not subtopics, he also used rough written plans for producing smaller sections of his thesis. He stated that often, before writing a particular section, he would jot down the section's main ideas in no particular order on a piece of paper, then cross them out as he worked them into his draft. As one might expect from his very goal-oriented personality, Vijay relied heavily on written plans.

Regarding outlines, David seemed to occupy a middle position, halfway between those of Helen and Vijay. He stated that although he did not ordinarily write from an outline, for major papers in the past he had often accumulated ideas on notebook paper and had written numbers beside the ideas to suggest a topic order prior to writing the first draft. He also said that when he had trouble writing a complicated section in the middle of a paper, he sometimes would stop and outline that particular section before continuing to write.

David began to write the first draft of his thesis without an outline. However, he said that after writing a little over a page of single-spaced prose and then typing it up for examination, "I looked at it and realized that my writing was pretty horrible. I didn't have a structure or anything." At that point, he wrote the following outline:
I. Intro--Seminal Importance  
II. Development of Industry in [the city]  
III. [The city] in 1917--Existence of Classes  
IV. Beginning of Organizing  
V. Violence/Strike Breakers  
VI. Community Institutions--Law  
VII. Negotiations  
VIII. Settlement of Strike  
IX. Conclusions

Despite an extensive, at times frantic, revision process, David's final copy follows the outline's structure closely.

Stotsky suggests that current models of the writing process underestimate the importance of written plans largely because these models are based on studies of writers producing brief, impromptu essays, not the extensive, research-based essays characteristic of academic writing. The fact that David had not used outlines for the short papers he had produced throughout his college career but did use one for his senior thesis appears to support Stotsky's view.

The chapter now turns its attention from the students' search processes to their writing processes--although the students demonstrated no such linear separation between the two processes.

**First Drafts**

The students' processes of producing their first drafts demonstrate the well-established concept that the writing process is recursive. In fact, the students' processes of researching, writing, and revising seemed not merely to overlap, but to alternate with one another to some degree as the students produced their drafts. At first, this finding
seems to undermine Kuhlthau's (18) and Stotsky's ("On Planning" 51-52) claims that the search process is largely separate from the writing process in research-based writing. Upon closer examination, however, the finding appears to support another theory: Ford, Rees, and Ward's view that long, elaborate research papers require different competencies from those required for shorter, simpler research papers (51-52). Since Kuhlthau's and Stotsky's claims are both based on Kuhlthau's study of high-school seniors writing research papers, perhaps that claim should be limited to somewhat simpler papers than the theses described in this chapter. The students' processes do, however, support Kuhlthau's and Stotsky's claim that students who do not find a focus prior to beginning the first draft are likely to experience great difficulty in writing the paper. Finally, data from this section call into question the romantic concept of the sudden, almost mystical, bolt-from-the-blue epiphany during writing.

Of course, Vijay and Helen had both completed the laboratory portions of their research prior to beginning to write their first drafts. But as already mentioned, Vijay’s practice in writing the first part of his thesis was to read the next source he would use in his chronological overview (or sometimes to skimmingly reread it, since he had already read many of these sources during the previous fall semester), usually taking a few notes, and then write the section of the thesis pertaining to that source. He wrote the very first few
sections longhand, both because he could write faster than he
could type and because he could always recover handwritten
material he had crossed out, whereas, he said, "When you press
delete, it's gone forever." Soon, however, he began to
compose directly at the word processor, largely for ease in
revising. After writing any one section, Vijay would revise
that section until he was satisfied with both the style and
content before moving on to the next section. "I'll compose
a little bit, say a subheading's worth, then revise, revise,
revise," he said. "Move on, revise, revise. Type, proofread,
analyze, type, proofread, analyze. And in between are the
chunks of reading." He added that in any one of his twice-a-
week, four-hour blocks of work, he typically produced about
one page of his draft—a slow rate for simply composing a
rough draft, but a reasonable rate for reading, taking notes,
writing, and revising. In any event, far from having
completed his research prior to writing the first draft, Vijay
started a new researching/writing/revising cycle with each new
subheading, sometimes even with each new paragraph, of the
first part of his thesis.

Vijay added, however, that this was not his usual method
of composing. Rather, it was an adjustment to the
circumstances: a long paper, months to complete the paper,
and only a limited amount of work time available in any given
week. His previous college papers had been much shorter and
had never involved more than three weeks of "active work
time," and usually not more than a week or so. Thus, as Ford, Rees, and Ward suggest (51-52), the longer paper required different competencies. Vijay also pointed out that for most previous papers, he had not used a word processor, with its revise-as-you-go capabilities. "Some of the difference in my approach may be inherent in the difference between a computer and a typewriter," he said.

Of course, a word processor allows one not only to reword sentences but also to add material in the middle or even to move entire paragraphs and pages without retyping. Vijay stated that during his "pre-draft revision"--revision prior to completing the first draft--he sometimes added new material and moved sections. Thus, his revisions were not always a matter of minor rewordings.

Like Vijay, Helen not only began writing the first draft before completing her reading research but also revised each small segment before moving on. In early February, when her first interviews took place, she had not yet read all the articles Dr. Carter had provided, and she had not yet searched for books in the University library. In fact, she put off searching the library until spring break. By mid-February, however, she had begun to write her first draft, starting with an account of the results of the laboratory experiments, material she could discuss without having completed her background reading.
Despite her faith in writing as discovery, Helen did not fit the writing-as-discovery mold of one who writes rapidly and then reworks the material through many drafts. In fact, like Dr. Carter, she sought to perfect individual sentences before even writing them down:

It’s more trouble to have to go back and change things every time you revise than it is to write it down right the first time. If I can’t get the sentence down the way I want it, I’m not even gonna write it down, even if it takes me 20 minutes to write the sentence.

A connection may exist between Helen’s composing process and her speaking style. The frequent pauses and mid-sentence shifts in direction which at times made her speech difficult to follow may have sprung from the same source as her determination to make each sentence easy to follow: the desire to say it right before going on. In speech, this editing could be heard.

David, too, conducted at least some research after having begun to write the paper. During an interview in early July, he had written roughly half of what would become his completed rough draft, but he had not yet gone to the regional history museum, a location which provided him with at least one source cited in the final copy of the paper.

Like Vijay, David began his draft in longhand but quickly--after just a page and a half, in fact--switched to composing at the word processor. He never discussed the extent to which he revised individual sentences as he composed them, but the 1 1/2 pages in longhand suggest that he did so
rather extensively: roughly one-third of the material on those pages is either crossed out or else consists of marginalia. But given that this longhand material represents David’s first attempts to start writing the most ambitious essay he had ever attempted, the amount of internal revision in this material may be misleading.

At any rate, all three students composed their first drafts incrementally, in each case over a period of roughly a month. This supports one commonsense application of Ford, Rees, and Ward’s theory, an application voiced by Tom in Chapter Seven: long, complicated papers require extended reflection and tenacity over a series of composing sessions and are unlikely to be produced in one of those frenzied all-nighters so dear to student lore.

This incremental approach allows us to examine the students’ drafts in terms of the often-expressed view, here quoted from Faigley and Witte, that "expert [writers] often stop to reread what they have written, making significant retrospective adjustments as they move forward" (407). Vijay stated that before writing any new section, he would run a hard copy of what he had written thus far and reread it, making changes on the hard copy and then typing those changes into the word processor. Besides stylistic revisions, he said, he also reread what he had written to check "the fluidity of ideas" and "to reassure the line of thought," returning his concentration to the thesis after having spent
time thinking about other matters. "It primes my mental pump," he said of the rereading. But such pump-priming has its limits. During one interview, Vijay held up a six-page section of his draft-in-progress, estimated that he had reread the first three pages "about ten times," and added that he had recently begun skipping those pages in his rereading sessions because it had become "painful" to look at them again.

David, too, revised extensively from hard copy. (A typical printed-out page of one of David's drafts, covered with David's longhand revisions, is reproduced as Appendix J on page 690.) In printout after printout as David worked his way toward a complete first draft, not only had new paragraphs been added at the end, but earlier paragraphs were reworded or even reordered, and sentences added or deleted. At first David, like Vijay, would start each new writing session by rereading what he had written previously "to regain my train of thought." Also, as he wrote he left himself notes, in all capital letters, specifying places where material needed to be added ("[DISCUSS TREND OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY NOW--SEE GOVAN AND LIVINGGOOD P. 417]," for example). These notes sometimes appear in the middle of a composing session, suggesting that David at times did not want to lose his momentum by looking up sources and instead put off until later his return to the researching stage. They also appear on the last few lines of most of the early printouts, as David ended each session with a reminder to himself about what to discuss next. The longer
printouts from later in the first draft process generally do not end with such notes. David also stated that he eventually stopped rereading what he had written before each composing session because once he reached the part of the thesis discussing the strike itself, the chronological nature of events allowed the writing to "organize itself." Still, for David as for Vijay and Helen, the processes of researching, writing, and revising overlapped extensively during the composing of the first draft. One corollary of Ford, Rees, and Ward’s theory about longer papers may be that such overlapping is almost inevitable in such papers, whereas in shorter papers the separation of stages described by Kuhlthau and Stotsky is likelier.

The experiences of these three students provide more support for Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s view that the focus for research-based writing ideally should emerge during research, prior to writing the first draft. For Vijay, the focus had emerged long before he wrote the first draft: while still working as a research assistant, he had already learned how to interpret the results of the research and assess its significance for origin-of-life theories. Thus, he knew what he was looking for when he read the related literature, and he began his rough draft with a clear sense of what he would do. During an early interview, he stated that he intended to follow his outline "systematically right down the line"--that
is, to write the first draft in the order in which the topics appeared in the outline, rather than skipping around and putting the sections together later. During a later interview, he confirmed that he had behaved as predicted. His extensive "pre-draft" revision notwithstanding, Vijay stated that most of the thesis had not been difficult to compose. The one exception, what he called "excruciating" to write, was the part he had originally expected to be the easiest of all: the description of experimental procedures he had conducted for Dr. Carter. By way of explanation, Vijay said:

I've always had a clear sense of what we've learned from our experiments, the significance of what we've done, and the kinds of ideas and speculations we can create from what we've learned. But it's easy for me to forget the little things we did during our experiments to get our speculations on track.

Vijay never mentioned consulting his laboratory notebook, possibly because he wrote the experimental-procedures section over spring break, when Dr. Carter, who kept the laboratory notebooks, was out of town. Many of Vijay's other comments, however, indicate that his difficulties with the experimental-procedures section stemmed not so much from trouble remembering as from difficulty knowing how much detail to include. Vijay was writing about a series of experiments, with certain procedures repeated in each experiment and certain others changed, so that repetition was at times inextricably wound with new material. In addition, both Vijay and Helen had to determine the extent to which they would employ the concise style characteristic of experimental
reports and to what extent they would employ the expansive style characteristic of senior theses. Other than the experimental-procedures section, however, Vijay encountered little difficulty writing the paper, having already formulated a focus and gained a firm grasp of his material prior to writing.

The situation for Helen was different. Presumably, she knew why Dr. Carter was conducting the research on which she was working—to try to find quinine derivatives with stronger antimalarial properties than quinine itself possesses—but she never mentioned this concept during the interviews. Instead, she repeatedly referred to her difficulties understanding the experiments. As long as she could not fully understand the experiments, she could not hope to correlate those experiments with other research, as Vijay was so intent on doing in his thesis. Once, after stating that Dr. Carter sometimes adjusted his research strategy as a result of reading journal articles about similar work, Helen stated that she would have been unable to make similar adjustments: "I’m not as experienced at finding similarities. I know enough about the research for our own case, but not enough to relate it to other people’s research."

As previously mentioned, Helen began writing her first draft with a summary of the experiments themselves and their results—material which would appear in the middle of her actual thesis. She did not begin with what would come first
in the actual thesis, the literature-review introduction, because she had not yet read all the literature and because she did not yet understand the experiments sufficiently to correlate them with other studies. Given her already-discussed belief in writing as a method of discovery, she probably hoped that writing the middle would prepare her for the more difficult task of writing the beginning.

In fact, by starting in the middle, Helen was simply invoking her usual strategy. Confident of the generative power of writing, she viewed a prematurely written introduction in much the same way that she viewed an outline:

I used to write the introduction first, but it would take hours to write just the introduction because you’re not sure yet what you’ll say. It’s much easier to write the middle part first. That way, by the time you write the introduction and tell what you’re gonna say, you know what it is because you’ve already said it.

Nevertheless, Helen found her standard procedure somewhat disconcerting this time, precisely because of her difficulty with focus and with mastering the material prior to writing. She stated that although she had always achieved good results in the past by starting in the middle, "This time it feels different because on all the other papers I would already have the backgrounds and would know everything. I don’t this time."

Not surprisingly, then, writing the paper was a difficult process for Helen. She missed the deadline by which she was supposed to provide Dr. Carter with a rough draft—a major
problem, given what he called his "fetish" about deadlines—and even when she did provide him with a draft, it was of only a little more than half of what would eventually be the completed thesis. By that time, she had doubled back and rapidly written the literature-review introduction, along with most of the results-and-discussion section, leaving the experimental procedures section still to be written under intense deadline pressure.

But the one for whom the writing process was the most difficult was David. True, he understood his material better than Helen comprehended hers. However, while Helen had both the experimental-report structure and, presumably, her knowledge of the purpose of the experiments to give her a sense of organization and focus, David had little idea of an expected structure and, despite a bountiful supply of ideas, no single dominant concept to focus the draft. The handwritten material David produced in his first composing session describes the strike as a "revealing case" to test the leftist theory that capitalists favor periodic recessions as devices to maintain "class hegemony"; however, the same material also emphasizes the strike as a "watershed" event which management predicted would determine whether the city would be predominately union or non-union in the future. Also, the handwritten material ends by stating that the strike "reveals the core of the conflict between labor and capital: the capitalist interests, it will be shown, were battling to
prevent labor militancy through unionism, while the laborers were battling for their own empowerment." Within two paragraphs, David has introduced three possible controlling ideas for the paper. In the second version, the first to be printed on a word processor, all three concepts remain prominent; but also prominent are the theory about community support of strikers in small towns, an argument that the 1917 strike "serves as an embryonic indicator of the future of industrial labor relations in the southeast," and a statement that the violence of the 1917 strike disproves claims that labor violence in this region began in the 1920's. The last sentence on the printout reads, "To prevent a glossing over of history and to insure historical accuracy, then, is the value of this study." David's numerous subsequent printouts also reveal that at various times during his first-draft process, he used three entirely different paragraphs as his opening paragraph.

In our only interview during the weeks when he was composing the first draft, David said:

At the beginning, I was jumping all over the place, and half of it's wrong. But I had a dramatic breakthrough about halfway down page seven, when I realized something really big, that the owners weren't motivated by fear of losing power but by the fact that unionism was antithetical to the way they saw the world, so that they reacted with class solidarity. So from there on, it's all good work because I know what I'm trying to say.

At that point, then, David seemed confident that this "breakthrough," which now left him attempting to modify rather
than to confirm the "capitalist hegemony" theory, would focus the paper. At the time of the interview, David had completed nine single-spaced pages, meaning that he had written another 1 1/2 single-spaced pages since getting his "breakthrough idea" and was still writing material which supported that idea. An examination of his later printouts reveals, however, that after the interview, he pursued the "breakthrough idea" for only a few more sentences, after which it disappears from the thesis except for a one-sentence reference in the concluding paragraph. The supposed "breakthrough" allows David only to analyze the motives of the owners, whereas most of the material in David’s thesis deals with the strikers. Thus, David’s "breakthrough" could not possibly focus the essay David was trying to write; instead, it was merely his most recent minor "epiphany."

Significantly, too, although David described this "breakthrough" as a sort of bolt from the blue occurring during composition, one can trace the idea developing in his thoughts long before he began writing the first draft. His thesis proposal, written over six months before he started the first draft, discusses classes and class solidarity. When I observed David reading the 1917 newspaper articles, over two weeks before the "breakthrough" took place, he not only consciously sought evidence of group solidarity but also discussed how the articles revealed management’s views of the rights of labor and of management, although without using the
term "world view." Thus, what David perceived as a sudden insight is perhaps more accurately described as a deepening of already-existing insight, a deepening brought about by his putting his ideas into writing.

One can similarly trace the slow development of concepts Helen and Vijay described as sudden discoveries during their writing. Interviewed after completing her thesis, Helen said:

I learned things as I was writing. I had looked at the data again and again last summer and last fall, and Dr. Carter had told me how the mass spec 140 reading explained about the ester occurring at C9 instead of C10, but for some reason I missed it until I wrote about it. So I learned to explain things better. It was easier to explain things once I thought about it for a while.

But right from the first interview, before she had begun to write the first draft, Helen had described what she called a "breakthrough" as occurring when Dr. Carter received the mass spectroscopy data. So she had known all along that the mass spectroscopy data explained the experimental results; she just did not know how that data explained them until she wrote about it. Given her persistent examination and re-examination of the data during the fall, it is possible that if she had been interviewed early enough, by someone who understood chemistry well enough to probe her responses, it might have turned out that for her, too, the "discovery" during the first draft was really more of a rediscovery with added comprehension.

Similarly, Vijay described the preface to his thesis as something that "just sort of came together" while he was
writing. Most of this preface, however, simply reprints verbatim an article about undergraduate research at the University which Vijay had previously published in the student literary magazine. Besides the reprinted article, Vijay's preface consists of two paragraphs, one correlating the experiments on which Vijay assisted Dr. Carter with "the work of many authors across centuries," and one emphasizing that these experiments are the basis of an article recently accepted for publication in a chemical journal. Thus, the preface contains no concepts Vijay had not previously written about or discussed in interviews.

The constructed nature of the students' "breakthroughs" may call into question the traditional image of the sudden inspiration which occurs during writing. It may also problematize the composition community's reliance on retrospective interviews for data about the writing process. It would seem that even the most cooperative, self-aware interview subjects may unintentionally exaggerate the nature of their sudden inspirations, especially enthusiastic persons like David who may mistakenly assume that their latest idea will be the paper's focus.

Perhaps the students' statements about sudden insights merely emphasize what had previously seemed a parenthetical part of Stotsky's theory. Consider a quotation which appeared in Chapter One of this dissertation, this time with certain words underlined:
The act of "discovery" may well take place—or at least take place initially—during the search process rather than the composing process for most academic research and writing. . . . ("On Developing" 207)

Perhaps the process of discovery, like the writing process itself, is recursive, as our inspirations return to our consciousness, ideally in more depth each time, throughout our processes of thinking about and writing about a topic.

Once the students had completed a draft of their theses, their advisors' roles as prominent influences on the students' textual voices again became evident. This chapter now examines the interaction between the students and their advisors as the students revised their drafts.

Conferences with Advisors—First Draft

The three students discussed in this chapter received almost all their feedback on their theses prior to receiving a grade, during conferences with their advisors and during oral defenses before their committees. Of all the ways that their experiences differ from those of most undergraduates producing research papers, this may be one of the most significant.

Nevertheless, the students were not content to hand sloppy work to their advisors, secure in the knowledge that the advisors would fix things for them. All three had already revised extensively before showing their drafts to their advisors.
Vijay, characteristically, had taken the most care to make certain his work was exceptional before even showing a draft to Dr. Carter. The draft was due to be handed to Dr. Carter on the Monday before spring break, and although Vijay had been working on the draft during his twice-a-week, four-hour work sessions for about three weeks prior to spring break, he estimated that he spent about 100 hours working on the thesis during the break. He had completed a draft of the thesis by Thursday of spring break, and despite his meticulous revisions during the writing of that draft, he reworked the draft before handing it to Dr. Carter the following Monday. First, he put aside the manuscript for one day, a procedure which he said was standard for him. Once again, although Vijay knew almost nothing about writing-process research, he sounded remarkably like a composition specialist:

If I can put the paper aside for a while, then when I come back to it, my mind is cleared and I don't have an outline imposed on what I'm reading. I can sort of divorce myself from the writing and see what needs to be changed, rather than getting defensive and trying to preserve what's on the page. I can disengage my ego and get closer to the perspective of the person on the committee.

Vijay eventually revised his first complete draft so extensively that some pages contained almost as many words of longhand revision as of printed text. Only after he had printed out a second complete draft incorporating these changes did he submit his work to Dr. Carter.

Interviewed before he received the students' drafts, Dr. Carter had predicted that the students would have to rewrite
their theses extensively, although characteristically he discussed the expected revisions in terms of correctness of wording rather than in terms of ideas:

I've never seen a student paper that I've been head over heels in love with the first draft. It's usually several revisions to get it to the point where you'd show it to anyone else. You read the first versions, and they come out so funny. The language of science is very much a foreign language, and they don't know the idioms. It's like the Russian sailors with the Russian-English dictionary in *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming.* "Emergency. Everybody to get off of the street." They write science like that.

But, in fact, Dr. Carter wrote relatively few criticisms or suggestions on Vijay's draft. The draft contains only 1.2 suggestions or corrections per page, with half of the pages containing no suggestions or corrections at all. Indeed, most of the suggestions and corrections are at the word or phrase level or else involve deleting a comma. On only three pages were larger changes called for. As a result of those three suggestions, Vijay eventually reworded three sentences on one page to describe more accurately the work of a previous researcher and largely overhauled two pages in, predictably enough, the Experimental Procedures section.

Dr. Carter also wrote "excellent" or--in the case of the transition Vijay had pointed to with pride during an earlier interview--"excellent transition" in four places and "good" in two others. Perhaps his ultimate compliment, although unintentional, came when he wrote in the margin beside Vijay's description of the origin of the citric acid cycle, "Just be
sure these are your own words." The words were, in fact, Vijay’s own; they merely sounded professional. "Vijay is a very exceptionally talented person in terms of every detail," Dr. Carter said later in discussing the draft.

Interestingly, Vijay was slightly disappointed that Dr. Carter did not suggest more revisions:

I was very much expecting the barrage of gunfire on the Experimental Procedures section. Better to have red ink on my paper than to hear during orals, "Now, why didn’t you do it this other way?" I’m just surprised he didn’t mark up the earlier material. But I’m glad he marked the Experimental Procedures part, because I was relatively clueless as to the expected form. I have no ego problem with that at all.

Helen’s first draft-critiquing conference was not as encouraging as Vijay’s. During an early interview, she had said, "I know Dr. Carter’s gonna want me to fix things up, and I’m sure we’re gonna go through a lot of revisions, and he’ll help me. But when I show my draft to him, I want to be able to think it’s my final draft." After missing her first deadline, however, she had ended up trying to turn in a handwritten draft, only to have Dr. Carter insist that she type it up before he would read it. The fact that the draft was incomplete added to Dr. Carter’s worries.

Dr. Carter wrote an average of 3.4 suggestions or corrections per page on Helen’s draft. As on Vijay’s draft, most corrections or changes on Helen’s draft are small-scale. But while small-scale corrections on Vijay’s paper tend to be matters of general style (cutting "questioning" from "their
fellow questioning man," for example) or slight adjustments for factual accuracy (changing "not based entirely upon experimental evidence" to "not based upon much experimental evidence," for example), the small-scale corrections on Helen's paper suggest that she lacked control of the idioms of chemistry (for example, changing "the H-9 signal shifted to the left" to "the H-9 signal shifted downfield," "refractive index" to "Rf value," and "1 acetic acid: 2 dioxane mixture" to "1:2 acetic acid/dioxane mixture"). Other small-scale changes suggested that Helen still encountered some difficulty with the chemistry itself (for example, corrections in formulas and, in the title, changing "Quinine" to "Quinine Derivative").

Equally significant was Dr. Carter's style of making the changes. While on Vijay's draft Dr. Carter sometimes only circled a word and put a question mark in the margin, leaving Vijay to choose how to reword, on Helen's draft he invariably crossed out the questionable words and replaced them with his own. Although Helen's draft contains no more suggestions for large-scale changes than does Vijay's, Dr. Carter merely provided Vijay with guidelines for these larger changes ("How? How long? With what?" in the margin beside a description of an experimental procedure, for example), leaving Vijay to choose how to reword, while in four cases he simply added sentences to Helen's draft. Evidently, Dr. Carter trusted Vijay to make needed changes more than he did Helen.
Nevertheless, Dr. Carter evidently saw potential in Helen’s draft, writing "Good" in seven places on the draft. Dr. Carter described his reaction to Helen’s draft in mixed terms. He said that unlike Vijay’s draft, Helen’s did contain the "foreign language" problems he often encountered in students’ writing. He also said, however, that he frequently marked up students’ first drafts considerably more than this one and that seeing the draft made him less worried about whether or not Helen would meet her deadline. "As soon as I read through her draft and realized it was going okay, my panic level subsided," he said.

Similarly, Helen described her own reaction to the critique in mixed, almost contradictory, terms. At one point, she said:

Dr. Carter wasn’t upset, but he goes, "You’ve got to work on this." And I tried so hard to get it right the first time that I was like, "Huh! I thought it was good!" You know, you get upset after somebody says your rough draft isn’t good. I think he was trying to pressure me, acting like it was worse than it was. At least, that’s what I try to tell myself. [She laughs.]

Yet during the same interview, she also said, "Dr. Carter didn’t really mess up my first draft. It had to be clarified a little bit, but nothing major. And he’d write all the good points. I went back and counted seven ‘goods,’ and I was excited about that."

If Vijay’s first draft-critiquing conference was a positive experience and Helen’s mixed, David’s was traumatic. First, there was the matter of deadlines. Interviewed on
Wednesday, July 5, David had written a little more than half of what would become his complete first draft. He planned on handing the completed first draft to Dr. Montgomery by Friday, July 7, or Monday, July 10. In fact, however, David and Dr. Montgomery did not sit down to discuss the rough draft until Monday, July 31. Some of the delay resulted from Dr. Montgomery's having been out of town, but much of the delay resulted from David's taking longer than he had anticipated to complete his first draft. When David and Dr. Montgomery finally sat down to discuss the rough draft, only four days remained before the other committee members were to receive their copies of the thesis, and only a week remained before David's oral defense. Thus, David would have very little time to make extensive revisions.

And extensive revisions were called for. Dr. Montgomery wrote an average of slightly over twenty corrections or comments per page on David's 35-page draft. The average would have been still higher if not for two pages which received only a single comment--essentially, that everything on the page would have to go. Furthermore, of the more than 700 comments and corrections, only three even come close to praise: "At last!" after a citation which included information many earlier citations had omitted; "You are back to your theme here--back to paper's flow--at least what flow it has!"; and "This may be your theme" beside the paper's next-to-last sentence.
As the last two comments suggest, the problem which had plagued David all along--his difficulty settling on a controlling idea--plagued his draft. David's opening paragraph cites two sources which downplay the city's labor struggles, after which it concludes, "To ignore, let alone to deny, the struggle of [the city's] industrial laborers is an injustice--an injustice this paper seeks to rectify by exploring the textile industrial conflict in [the city] in 1917." Thus, the introduction establishes no central point other than that the city has had labor struggles and that the paper will use a 1917 strike to demonstrate those struggles. The essay's final paragraph draws four conclusions, three of them applying established economic theories to the strike. However, none of these four summarizes the essay as a whole, and only two of the four have even been mentioned in the essay prior to the concluding paragraph. As with the advanced students writing for new (to them) discourse communities in Williams and Colomb's study (104), David seems to have "discovered" the main points in his conclusion by writing his way to them. Not surprisingly, then, seven of Dr. Montgomery's written comments complain about the lack of a clear theme.

Even more alarming, on the occasions when the paper does bring up major points, points which with revision might become themes, Dr. Montgomery seems unconvinced by the evidence David presents. In one early paragraph, David attempts to establish
the "seminal importance" of the strike by using the "watershed" quotation, a list of state and national officials who came to the city to support one side or the other during the strike, a labor leader’s statement, and the fact that thousands of workers signed union cards for the first time as a result of the strike. In the margin is Dr. Montgomery’s comment: "needs strengthening--any other evidence?" Beside the labor leader’s quotation is the comment "What is this supposed to prove?", and beside the passage about thousands of workers signing union cards is the word "Replace." Where David claims that most sources portray the region’s labor relations as good during the war years, with violent conflicts not beginning until the 1920’s, Dr. Montgomery circled "most studies" and wrote, "Name some! At least in footnote." Where David introduces his "breakthrough" claim that the owners resisted the workers not for financial reasons but because the concept of organized labor was "antithetical" to their beliefs about property, Dr. Montgomery wrote, "Do any say this? Prove it!

Perhaps most telling are Dr. Montgomery’s comments beside the section in which David attempts to portray the strike’s violence as evidence of class conflict. David first describes three non-fatal stabbings and a non-fatal clubbing in fights between union members and scab laborers or management informants, a fistfight between union members and a sales manager and salesman, and union members’ threats, never
fulfilled, to destroy a factory. Dr. Montgomery wrote beside this material "But this is all violence among labor--not class warfare. Not really much violence, either!" Also, where David mentions that to establish order the governor sent state rangers to the city, where they stayed for five days, Dr. Montgomery wrote "Why only five days?" David was finally facing the consequences of having researched the "wrong" strike. During the strike David had originally intended to research, the 1917 streetcar workers' strike, a company guard had fatally shot a man when a throng of strikers had tried to block a streetcar's route, and the situation became so threatening that the Secretary of War had ordered federal troops into the city, where they remained for roughly a month. While such material may or may not have been sufficient to support David's claims, it was certainly stronger material than what David had to work with.

Although many of Dr. Montgomery's comments concern central themes and supporting evidence, most deal with smaller-scale matters. Many ask for more specific information ("How many?", "When was this?", "For whom?", etc.), but the overwhelming majority are stylistic corrections. As Dr. Carter did with Helen's draft, Dr. Montgomery almost invariably crossed out David's words and rewrote the sentences. In the rare instances when Dr. Montgomery left the wording changes up to David, his comments were less than diplomatic--for example, "A horrible sentence--reword." A
typical page of David's draft, with Dr. Montgomery's comments on it, is reproduced as Appendix K on page 691.

Dr. Montgomery's stylistic changes unquestionably improve the essay, particularly by eliminating wordiness. In one example from among dozens, a sentence David had written as

While it is true that the violence which did occur locally in 1917 did not involve two massive armed camps as later conflicts in the Southeast did, it is also true that the violence was so pronounced that the State Rangers were sent in because the manufacturers feared actual class warfare.

becomes in Dr. Montgomery's revision

Local violence in 1917 did not involve two massive armed camps as later southeastern conflicts did, but it was so pronounced that the State Rangers were sent in to avert class warfare.

Despite the stylistic improvement, however, many composition specialists would question Dr. Montgomery's tactics. Prevailing responding theory suggests that during rough-draft conferences teachers should avoid rewriting students' prose and especially should avoid suggesting many changes at the sentence level or below, especially if the student needs to rework larger elements of the essay, as in David's case. Too much emphasis on small-scale matters, the argument goes, might reinforce students' unfortunate tendency to equate revision purely with polishing up and rewording rather than with re-seeing the essay as a whole. Furthermore, if the student can be convinced to change larger elements, then there is little use in rewording individual sentences,
since those sentences might not even appear in the final copy (Brannon and Knoblauch).

It is important to realize that Dr. Montgomery was working under unusual circumstances. In just four days, David would have to produce an acceptable senior thesis, after which he would graduate and go to other places where his writing might be the evidence by which people would judge the University's honors program. Ideally, David should have been able to work his way toward a controlling idea, then reorganize the essay around that controlling idea, and finally eliminate his stylistic infelicities. But there was no time for him to do so. David would simply have to do the best he could to improve in all these areas at once.

In further defense of Dr. Montgomery, his stylistic corrections may have been rooted at least partly in concerns involving larger elements of the essay. Asked about his handling of David's draft, he said:

David's style isn't bad. But when I edit a paper closely like that, I'm looking for two things. Number one is readability and flow. Like a lot of students, David has a problem with flow, with transitions. And when you don't have transitions, often it also indicates that you don't have the other thing I'm looking for: a theme to hang the material on.

Nevertheless, one could argue that Dr. Montgomery should have limited his stylistic revisions to a few representative sentences and transitions, along with instructions to David to revise the rest of his text in similar fashion. Faced with an average of twenty markings per page, almost all of which
pointed to things he had done wrong, for 35 pages, David must have felt buried beneath an avalanche of criticism. Not surprisingly, his initial reactions were defensive. Beside Dr. Montgomery's comment "You are back to your theme here," David wrote "No, you are wrong," with "wrong" underlined three times, suggesting not only how frustrated David was but also how difficult it was to find any central theme in his draft. Of Dr. Montgomery's detailed editing, David said, "It bothered me at first. It felt like he was taking over writing the damn thing. I felt insulted." With only four days to produce an acceptable thesis for his committee, David had little time to dwell on feeling insulted--or even on the panic he must also have felt.

All three students had at least one more conference with their advisors prior to turning in the final drafts of their theses to the entire committee. The chapter now turns to these later conferences.

**Subsequent Conferences with Advisor**

After Vijay received his draft back from Dr. Carter, his remaining work on the thesis was largely anticlimactic. He had a week to produce a final copy for his thesis committee and for the Kerrigan Award committee. During that week Vijay made several trips to Dr. Carter's office, carrying handwritten lists of questions with him, but the questions largely involve citation form and other technical matters. He also printed out four more versions of the thesis, but the
later drafts are almost identical to one another. Once Vijay had incorporated the changes suggested by Dr. Carter’s comments on his earlier draft and had added two other sentences on his own, the remaining changes were largely matters of proofreading and document format.

Helen faced a more difficult task. She still had to write almost half of her paper—and ideally, to do it in a way that would show how much she had learned from Dr. Carter’s comments on the earlier material. And she continued to face intense deadline pressure. As Dr. Carter said later, "During that last week, I don’t think Helen did much besides work on the paper."

Given that the first seventeen pages of Helen’s second draft incorporate changes Dr. Carter had suggested in his previous comments, it is not surprising that Dr. Carter averaged less than one correction per page on those pages. More significantly, he averaged only 2.1 suggestions or corrections per page on the thirteen pages of new material, far below the figure for Helen’s first draft. More important, the markings never involve more than a phrase or a formula, and the closest thing to a correction involving the "idioms of science" is a "20 by 20 cm" being changed to "20 x 20 cm." Evidently the language of science was becoming less Greek—or in this case, more Greek—to Helen.

To appreciate fully Helen’s improvement, we must examine not Dr. Carter’s written comments but his actions. While Dr.
Carter was reading Helen’s second draft, Helen had gone to the University’s computer center, which is up a steep hill from the chemistry building, to work on the endnote page. Here is Helen’s account of that experience:

So I was up there just feeling sick, thinking, "Here I am typing up endnotes, and he could be down there saying to himself, ‘This paper is horrible!’ What am I doing here while he’s probably down there tearing up the rest of my paper?" But then I turned around, and there he was! I guess he had seen that I was pretty stressed out about the paper because he came up the hill himself. And the first thing when he came in, he goes, "You know, this is a pretty good paper." And I said, "Was it really, or are you just talking?" But I knew—I can tell when Dr. Carter’s happy. And he goes, "You know, after all that stress you put me through, I wouldn’t have accepted B work." And I knew that was his way of telling me it was A work. I can remember all that like it was yesterday, because it just made me feel so good to know that he thought I did a good job.

It is difficult to imagine a stronger statement of the power of the mentor-protege relationship. In undergraduate education, we tend to envision such relationships as athletic or artistic, and usually extracurricular: coach and athlete, director and actor, accomplished painter or musician and gifted apprentice. Helen’s experience reminds us that the relationship can take place in other fields and that expository writing can lie at the heart of the relationship.

"I got real hard with her as the deadlines were approaching and actually made some threats because I thought I needed to," Dr. Carter said. "She just kept saying, ‘That’s fine. Everything’s fine.’ And damn, everything was! She did it!"
For Helen after the second version, as for Vijay after the first, further revision was largely routine and anticlimactic.

For David, of course, revisions were anything but anticlimactic. With so little time before the committee was to receive the paper, David presented another version to Dr. Montgomery the day after he had received the first version back. Alluding to the 1917 strike, but perhaps also bleakly joking about his own situation, David had written "Strike Two" at the top of the first page of this second version.

Clearly, David had been busy during the previous twenty-four hours: almost every sentence from the earlier version had been reworded. For the most part, however, David had simply typed in the rewordings Dr. Montgomery had written on the first draft. The second version still covered the same points in the same order as the first version.

David's revising procedure may confirm the wisdom behind composition specialists' advice to resist suggesting small-scale revisions of a draft which contains large-scale problems. Conceivably, Dr. Montgomery's hundreds of stylistic suggestions caused David to concentrate on rewordings, diverting most of his mental energy away from the essay's greater needs—a central theme and stronger supporting evidence. However, it could also be argued that time, not Dr. Montgomery, was the primary culprit. Having failed to find a central theme and stronger supporting evidence during the
previous seven months, David was unlikely to come up with these things in twenty-four hours, or in four days for that matter. David may have concentrated on the stylistic changes simply because they were the only improvements possible within his time limits.

Although the body of the paper generally maintained the same sentences, now improved by rewording, in the same order, David did change the introduction and the conclusion. Dr. Montgomery had written on the first draft that the conclusion did not fit with the rest of the paper; David now responded by simply dropping the conclusion. When the revised version reaches the settlement of the strike, it stops abruptly, with no attempt to explain the material’s significance. And while the first few sentences of the revised version contain only minor rewordings when compared with the previous draft, there is a new sentence at the end of the first paragraph, reading, "The ‘cheap and contented labor’ of the South, upon which many industrialists expected to build their empires, was about to explode out of this possible description, and [the city’s] textile conflict of 1917 sounded the initial rumblings of labor militancy and discontent." Unfortunately, although this sentence has the ringing sound of a thesis statement, it requires the paper to prove only that the 1917 strike was the city’s first expression of labor discontent.

With time running short, Dr. Montgomery invited David over to his house on the same evening that David had given him
the second version of his thesis. That evening, according to interviews with both, Dr. Montgomery told David, "You’ve got no theme--just a bunch of facts. Tell me what you’re trying to say." If some composition specialists would have disapproved of Dr. Montgomery’s handling of the first draft, almost all would praise his handling of this conference after the second draft. According to David:

He didn’t tell me what he thought the paper should say. He just listened and kept asking me questions. It was brilliant the way he pulled it out of me. Anyway, we finally got it down to these points he wrote in the margin: "Capitalism unjust in [the city] in 1917. Labor recognizes it. Growth of labor class consciousness." He wrote it, but they were all my words. But it seemed to me that I was rambling all over the place, and then he wrote those things down and said, "This is what you’ve been talking about." And he was right.

Of the same discussion, Dr. Montgomery said,

I wanted his interpretation, not to make him write down mine. But I wanted him to look at some of the consequences of the material he had. Students love to tell you what happened, period. David kept saying, "I thought all this would speak for itself." I tried to get him to see that what we make of this is much more important than what the people did, at least if you want thematic, interpretive history. That’s where all students have trouble--and the rest of us, too.

With the central themes established, Dr. Montgomery turned to structure and to David’s problems with the introduction and conclusion, telling David that the main points they had just discussed should be stated in the introduction. "I was surprised when he said that," David said later. "Those were conclusions, and he wanted them in the introduction." In his final interview, David attributed some
of his difficulties with structure to his having been exempt from the University's composition sequence and the History Department's research-writing sequence. He added that many "eminent" Honors Scholars had encountered difficulty with the senior thesis, sometimes failing the project, because their previous courses had left them unprepared to write in a relatively fixed form.

David worked desperately for the remainder of the week. In his final interview, he stated that he at one point stayed up for sixty straight hours, working on the paper virtually nonstop. He described himself as slumped over in his chair, face almost between his legs but hands still typing away on the computer keyboard, in a room covered with pages from sources and from previous drafts. "That final night, whenever I had to find page numbers for the citations, I kept having to burrow through the stacks of paper," he said. "I felt like a mole or something."

If anybody's experience demonstrates Kuhlthau's and Stotsky's contention that students who fail to find a focus prior to starting the rough draft encounter difficulty writing the paper, it is David's. His chastening experience is reflected in the cover letters he enclosed in the copies of his thesis that went to committee members. He closed his note to one committee member with "As I put the paper in your mail slot, I pray that your red ink pens have all dried up." Also, his note to Dr. Montgomery reads, in its entirety, "Here's my
revised honors paper. I think I’ve improved it a little." Given the extent of his earlier problems, the "I think" and "a little" sound suspiciously like admissions of failure.

As has just been discussed, all three students received plentiful feedback, both written and oral, from their advisors as they revised their earlier drafts. On their penultimate drafts, however, the feedback which they received was almost exclusively oral and occurred when they defended their theses before their thesis committees. This chapter will now discuss those thesis defenses.

**Oral Defenses**

Of the three students, Vijay was the only one whose thesis defense I was able to attend. While Vijay fielded some tough questions during his oral defense as the committee probed his comprehension of the experiments about which he had written, the committee seemed almost entirely satisfied with the thesis in the form in which they had received it. There were only three requests for revision, with each involving only the replacing of one word with another or the adding of an appositive after a technical term. Within thirty seconds after Vijay had left the room at the end of his oral defense, the committee had unanimously agreed to award his thesis highest honors.

While Vijay was out of the room, Dr. Carter told the other committee members, "I’ve been doing this for a number of years, and he’s the best lab assistant and the best student
I've ever had." Another committee member, one who also served on the Kerrigan Award committee, stated that only two theses remained in serious contention for the Kerrigan Award--Vijay's and a thesis by an English major, tracing Socratic influences on Kenneth Burke and Chaim Perelman. The man added that the Kerrigan committee was having great difficulty deciding between these two.

Helen's oral defense was entirely different from Vijay's. Dr. Carter said that Helen's oral defense was "far inferior to her written thesis. She had serious problems in there." In the written thesis, of course, Helen had controlled what topics would be discussed, whereas during the oral defense, the committee members were in control. Thus, while in the written thesis Helen could largely hide any difficulties she still had in understanding the experiments and their implications, during the oral defense those difficulties would be easier to spot. Furthermore, the same determination to revise each sentence which causes Helen to compose slowly also seems to cause speech patterns which sometimes make her sound uncertain even when she is not.

Nevertheless, the committee's suggested changes to her thesis itself were fairly minimal. The only demand for revision beyond the word or phrase level was a requirement that she add a conclusion, subheaded as such, at the end of the Results and Discussion section. The committee voted that once Helen had added a satisfactory conclusion, her thesis
would receive highest honors. Given her problems during the oral presentation, this decision suggests that the committee was highly pleased with the thesis itself.

In contrast, David’s committee members were not pleased with David’s thesis, nor had their red-ink pens run dry. Their written comments indicated that despite Dr. Montgomery’s help, David continued to encounter difficulty establishing clear themes, especially in his conclusion. One committee member wrote on the final page of his copy of the thesis, "No conclusion. What results? Were the city and its people different after 1917?" Another committee member wrote on his final page, "Lousy conclusion. Does not elaborate on themes set out in intro." This committee member’s comments also ask David to "put the strike in its historical place" and to provide a breakdown of the strikers by race, ethnic background, and gender. Still another committee member objected to David’s repeated references to "a working class consciousness," writing "Has a working class consciousness ever developed in the South—or in other parts of the U.S.?

According to both David and Dr. Montgomery, the committee David had selected consisted of extremely demanding professors. "All the bears were on it," David said. Dr. Montgomery said of the oral defense, "Poor David. There wasn’t a friendly face around that whole table."

"Both my roommates had thirty-minute orals," David said. "Mine took two hours. They asked really tough questions."
'Why didn’t you try it this way or do it that way?''

Dr. Montgomery, however, praised David’s performance during the orals, saying, "His defense was better than the paper itself. Orally, he saw things that I wish to hell he had put in the paper. We had him playing with all sorts of things he could’ve put in his conclusion and did not."

As Dr. Montgomery’s comment suggests, David simply had lacked the time necessary to harness his many ideas in writing. David said, "I knew what they wanted, and I knew how to come up with what they wanted. I just didn’t have the time to sit down and do the mental crunching necessary for that kind of analysis." He added in a mixed but wonderfully descriptive metaphor, "I had all these wonderful ideas running around in my head, and I had to just sweep them out the door."

It is important to mention that neither David nor Dr. Montgomery described the committee’s feedback as totally negative. "They were pleased that I had found history, writing about something nobody’s written about before," David said. "And they said, ‘You wrote an excellent narrative.’ But the analysis wasn’t there."

Dr. Montgomery described the exam committee’s function in terms remarkably similar to those he used to describe his own function in working with David’s draft:

We basically try to force students to see their research in a new light, to give them an appreciation of what they didn’t do, what they could’ve done. But we don’t brutalize the kids. We’ll pull back. But we’ve flunked some of these, too, and the kid has to stay around the next
semester and finish up.

Fortunately for David, he did not have to stay around. The committee agreed to pass David’s thesis on the condition that he rewrite the conclusion satisfactorily. According to Dr. Montgomery, the decision was unanimous, with no suggestions either that the thesis should fail or that it should receive highest honors.

After their oral defenses, the three students made their final revisions and turned in the completed theses, documents which this chapter will now discuss.

The Theses

As with the students, so with the papers they wrote: the most significant and most obvious trait about the senior theses is their superiority to the work discussed in other chapters of this study. But also as with the students themselves, Vijay’s thesis manages to stand out even in comparison to the work of his very able fellow honors students.

From the beginning, Vijay’s thesis insists on the significance of its contents. The first sentence of the preface is "The work described within this thesis occupies an important place in the development of scientific thought on the origin of life and metabolism." The second paragraph establishes that the thesis describes research already accepted for publication in a "refereed, international journal." And the final sentence of the thesis stresses that
"the photochemistry of saturated carboxylic acids is a relatively unexplored area and along with the biological implications of the results, this work reports on new chemistry."

While the final sentence stresses the research as new work in a relatively unexplored area, through most of the thesis Vijay frames that original research within the "development of scientific thought on the origin of life and metabolism" mentioned in his first sentence. The thesis cites 33 sources---12 books and 21 journal articles. The preface's second sentence reads, "It is one of this work's primary goals to convey to the reader not only a scientific sense of its value, but also a historical sense of where it fits into the grand scheme of thought on the subject." In fact, Vijay does not begin to discuss the research on which he assisted Dr. Carter until he has already devoted eighteen pages---more than half of the thesis, excluding the preface, acknowledgements, and citations---to an overview of speculations about the origins of life, the origins of the citric acid cycle, and the relationship between the citric acid cycle and the origins of life. When Vijay finally begins discussing the research on which he assisted Dr. Carter, he is careful to start by explaining how that research relates to the issues discussed in the overview. Vijay's Experimental Procedures section begins:

The work that this thesis will now describe in detail is an effort to determine whether the
reactions of the CAC [citric acid cycle] have the propensity to occur nonenzymatically under the primitive Earth condition of UV [ultraviolet] irradiation. If they do, one may speculate that protobiont metabolism evolved through the recruitment of pre-existing chemical reactions rather than the organisms first developing catalysts to conduct reactions that would otherwise not occur.  

Throughout the thesis, Vijay demonstrates the ability to adjust his tone to the situation. He maintains the virtually self-erasing passive voice of scientific reports throughout the Experimental Procedures section:

A 1.185 g (10.0 mmol) sample was dissolved in 100.0 ml of deionized H₂O to give a 0.100 M solution. Using a pipette aliquots of this solution were transferred to each of six 10 ml quartz test tubes putting ca. 7 ml into each.

Then, immediately after thirteen pages covering Experimental Procedures, Results, and Discussion, Vijay assertively begins the Conclusion section with his only use of "I" anywhere in the thesis, excluding the preface and the acknowledgements:

I speculate that those reactions seen in our experiments which are analogous to modern CAC [citric acid cycle] steps may represent chemical fossils in the evolution of this metabolism from non-biological roots.

As discussed earlier, Vijay throughout the thesis takes great care to write smooth transitions from concept to concept. For example, after describing an experiment which caused scientists to emphasize research more and theory less in their work regarding the origins of life, Vijay writes:
Following this experiment, the field of thought on the origin of life left the desk and entered the laboratory, as several scientists began to expose their speculations to experimental scrutiny.

Finally, as phrases like "chemical fossils" and "left the desk and entered the laboratory" suggest, the thesis at times contains a certain stylistic flair, without quite exceeding the boundaries of scientific writing. This flair may be seen not only in specific images but in larger elements such as the use of a preface and, after the heading marking the beginning of the Experimental Procedures section, an italicized epigram ("But philosophy is nothing but empty words if it is not capable of being tested by experiment."--Freeman Dyson). "He wrote in a flamboyant style that is not so characteristic of scientific writing, but it was nevertheless quite appealing," Dr. Carter said. "And the language was correct."

Of course, the thesis is not perfect. For one thing, it contains an average of roughly three errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar for every four pages of text. Comma problems are the most frequent difficulty, while occasionally using plural nouns and pronouns after "each" is perhaps the most noticeable, especially when one sentence begins "Each solution were." Also, while source-based material is always cited, the citation never specifies a page number, even when a passage is being quoted word for word. In one case, a fifty-seven-word passage, not exactly copied word for word from a source but not truly in Vijay's words, either, has a quotation mark at the end, but none at the beginning.
Overall, however, Vijay's thesis clearly merits the "Highest Honors" it received.

One other point about Vijay's thesis: it demonstrates that even if Vijay has never heard of Bakhtin, he recognizes the extent to which other voices have influenced his text. The third sentence of his preface, punctuated as written, says of his thesis, "It is the product of two years of research and yet, has been influenced by the work of many authors across the centuries." Also, the final sentence of the acknowledgements pays tribute to a particularly influential voice: "Foremost, it is with sincere gratitude and respect that I acknowledge the many contributions of Dr. James D. Carter to this work as well as to my development as a scientist."

Although Helen and Vijay produced theses of almost identical lengths, adhering to the structure required of experimental reports, their differing goals become evident when one compares the proportions each one devoted to the different sections of his or her thesis. Vijay, intent on framing his and Dr. Carter's research within ongoing speculation and studies, devoted eighteen pages of text to his literature-review introduction (plus another four pages to his preface, which further frames the research), and only a little over eleven to his Experimental Procedures, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion. Helen, seeing the research on which she had assisted Dr. Carter as the most important part
of the thesis and uncertain of her ability to correlate journal articles with that research, devoted twenty-four pages to her Results and Discussion, Conclusion, and Experimental Procedures sections, and only about 4 1/2 pages to her literature-review introduction. Helen also cited sixteen sources to Vijay's thirty-three.

Helen's determination to make clear to the reader the thought process behind the experiments guided her approach to the long Results and Discussion section, in which the following passage is fairly typical:

It was then realized that N-BH3 complexes were being formed (identified by the IR peak at 2400-2300 cm$^{-1}$). [Helen's endnote number] Treatment with a 1:2 acetic acid/dioxane mixture removed the complex, marked by a major, low Rf(polar) product in the TLC, while NMR still showed the absence of a vinyl signal. Yet the compound did not crystallize upon diethyl ether trituration.

Although Helen did not succeed in her goal of writing about the results in such a way that a nonspecialist could understand them, she does get across a sense of a series of the mental exploration involved.

Helen's thesis does not feature as wide a range in tone as Vijay's does; however, she does switch from the "discovery" style of her Results and Discussion section to the self-effacing style expected in the Experimental Procedures section:

A sample of 0.3108 g (2.85 mmol) 2-pyridylcarbinol and a sample of 0.3136 g (2.9 mmol) benzyl alcohol
were dissolved in 40 mL benzene in a 100 mL round bottom flask. To this flask was added 0.470 g (2.82 mmol) cinnamoyl chloride in one portion.

Helen’s thesis is also largely free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, containing only about two errors per five pages, chiefly comma problems or, less often, subject-verb agreement errors in sentences with many words between subject and verb.

Ironically, in spite of Helen’s determination to write the thesis her way, her thesis seems much more like generic scientific writing than does Vijay’s. When I asked Dr. Carter about Helen’s choice of putting the Results and Discussion before the Experimental Procedures, a choice she had heavily stressed as differentiating her thesis from that of Mary, her predecessor, Dr. Carter shrugged his shoulders and said, "It doesn’t really matter. Some journals put one first, and some put the other first." In evaluating Helen’s thesis, Dr. Carter said, "Well, nobody’s thesis is gonna be as good as Vijay’s. But Mary is now doing a Ph.D. at an excellent school, and Helen’s thesis is every bit as good as Mary’s."

Unfortunately, Helen’s thesis has one drawback of which Dr. Carter was unaware: like so many other research-based essays discussed in this dissertation, it is partly plagiarized. Of course, the discussion of the research on which Helen assisted Dr. Carter could not be copied from any published source. However, a careful examination of her
sources revealed that almost exactly half of the 4 1/2-page introduction is copied verbatim or almost verbatim from other sources without quotation marks, and usually without any other form of citation. Of this material, three passages, totalling six sentences and 128 words, are copied more or less verbatim from books which are cited, although not always cited accurately. Most disturbing is the fact that Helen’s main outside source by far for both ideas and wordings in her introduction—a source from which Helen copied more or less verbatim eleven sentences totalling 265 words in the introduction, without citations—is the thesis written by Mary, her predecessor. Helen also copied passages from Mary’s thesis in two other places. The first three sentences of Helen’s abstract are copied almost verbatim from Mary’s abstract, even though those sentences, which summarize the first part of Mary’s introduction clearly and precisely, only vaguely correspond to ideas in the first part of Helen’s introduction. Remarkably, two of the three sentences in Helen’s acknowledgements, including the sentence in which she thanks Dr. Carter, are copied almost verbatim from Mary’s acknowledgements.

In light of all this, Dr. Carter’s evaluation of Helen’s thesis as "every bit as good as Mary’s" contains a certain unintended irony. Even more ironic is the statement Helen made at the end of her final interview when she was asked if there was anything else she wanted on the record:
When I was worried about this project, I thought, "Well, if worse comes to worst, I can just look at Mary’s thesis and do it exactly the way she did." And that probably would’ve saved time, because hers was really short but still had everything necessary in there. But I suffered to get mine the way I wanted it. And I’m glad I did, because to me, this [tapping her completed manuscript] seems like the right way to do it.

Indeed, if it had not been for Helen’s statements throughout the interviews of her determination to make her thesis as unlike Mary’s as possible, the plagiarism would never have been detected: I examined Mary’s thesis only because I wanted to see how much its organization differed from that of Helen’s.

Still, one must not allow Helen’s plagiarism to overshadow her overall achievement. Helen always expressed her determination to make her thesis different from Mary’s in terms of overall organization—and in those terms, her thesis is much different from Mary’s. Although the plagiarized passages are extensive—almost three pages of largely verbatim copying, most of it lacking citations as well as quotation marks—these passages constitute less than 10 percent of the entire thesis. None of the plagiarized material is in the section Helen regarded as the crucial part of her thesis: the account of the research on which she assisted Dr. Carter. Most of the plagiarized material is in the sections Helen showed Dr. Carter in her first draft, the draft Dr. Carter responded to in lukewarm fashion. Of the material Helen added before showing Dr. Carter the second draft, the draft he
reacted so favorably to, none is plagiarized. Thus, the plagiarized passages did not necessarily play a major role in earning highest honors for Helen's thesis.

Because I did not check sources and discover Helen's plagiarism until I was about to write this chapter, two years after my last interview with Helen, I was unable to ask her whether or not the plagiarism was intentional. The fact that Helen extensively copied from Mary's thesis without citations, let alone quotation marks, at first seems damning, and her repeated insistence on independence from Mary's thesis could be interpreted as a coverup. However, Helen knew that just one year earlier, Dr. Carter had chaired Mary's thesis committee and thus had surely read more than one draft of Mary's thesis. As it turned out, the intervening year had been enough to prevent Dr. Carter from recognizing the copied passages; in fact, at least three of Helen's final-draft sentences are copied only almost verbatim because on the first draft Dr. Carter wrote in single-word changes to sentences Helen had copied verbatim from Mary's thesis. Still, the high risk of detection by Dr. Carter suggests that the plagiarism may have been unintentional. Also, given that Helen cited three passages in which she copied largely verbatim from books without quotation marks, thus failing to cover her tracks, it is possible that her plagiarism resulted more from ignorance or carelessness than from deliberate cheating.
Finally, we must consider Helen’s situation. She lacked confidence in her understanding of the principles underlying the research on which she had assisted Dr. Carter, as well as in her ability to correlate that research with other studies. As a result, she had procrastinated about reading the related literature, and she faced deadline pressure for the thesis as a whole. Thus, not only was the introduction a section she viewed as secondary to her account of the experiments themselves; it was also the section she felt least qualified to write. It is possible that she simply completed this section as rapidly as possible, without giving much thought to how she was doing it. Perhaps the safest conclusion is a Bakhtinian one: unlike Vijay, Helen was not always able to subordinate other voices to her own in the thesis, and unlike Vijay, she did not always acknowledge the contributions those other voices made to her own text.

Like Vijay and unlike Helen, David in his thesis always seems aware of the concept of (if not the term) heteroglossia and of the collaborative elements in even individual authorship. The second sentence of his acknowledgements reads, "Although my name fills the author’s space, I know that the [name of city] community did most of the work." He then thanks the workers at the University library, public library, and regional history museum, his thesis committee, several friends, and his parents.
Again like Vijay, David starts out with a certain flair. Following a page dedicating his thesis to "those people who believe their lives can be better, and are willing to do something about it," David makes good on his plan to begin with an epigraph. Rather than ironically using one of the quotations from management, as he had considered doing on the day I observed him as he read, David uses the striker’s quotation he had marked in his back-of-page notes as a good one for beginning his paper: "Isn’t it better to starve out in the fresh air and on the streets than working eleven hours a day in a mill, also starving, and making money for somebody else and none for yourself?"

The body of the thesis also begins vigorously, with David debunking rosy portrayals of the region’s labor situation:

In an article appearing in the [City] Times, business writer, Jasper Rogers, proclaimed that "serious labor trouble in [this city] is a thing unknown" (Times, Clipping File, 1931? 1938). He was mistaken. If Rogers had familiarized himself with earlier issues of the Times, he would not have been able to ignore the harsh reality of class conflict brought by the development of large-scale private industry in [this city].

Throughout David’s thesis, there is much to like. Aided by the voluminous suggestions from Dr. Montgomery and the other members of the committee, David created a stylistically smooth essay in which the unsupported claims from earlier drafts have been deleted. For example, the leftist critique associated with "capitalist hegemony," so important to David’s thought during his research and his writing of the first
draft, has simply disappeared in the finished version. David's exhaustive research effort is also obvious: his paper itself parenthetically cites thirty-three different issues of the city's 1917 newspaper and nineteen other sources, including books, articles from as far back as 1907, and obscure sources such as a local newspaper called Labor World, an unpublished 1914 diary, and an unpublished essay on local history. The bibliography lists fourteen other works in addition to the ones cited in the paper itself. David averages under one error in spelling, punctuation, or grammar per two pages, mostly either comma errors or misplacing of the apostrophe in plural possessives, as in "Manufacturer's Association" for "Manufacturers' Association." Other than the peculiar citation form for the Jasper Rogers material quoted above and a single failure to cite certain statistics, David handles quotations, paraphrases, and citations almost flawlessly.

In fact, through roughly its first half, David's thesis seems on a par with Vijay's. Obviously, the introduction quoted above commits David to establishing that sometime prior to 1931, the development of large-scale private industry in the city led to class conflict in the form of serious labor trouble. David then summarizes the strike, portraying it as a "watershed" event of "seminal importance" and as an event demonstrating that, contrary to the claims of other works (works which are named this time), serious labor trouble in
the South began prior to the 1920's. Pages four through twelve then trace the rise of large-scale private industry in the city, presenting considerable evidence to correlate this rise with impersonal working conditions and with wealth the owners accumulated largely by paying the workers subsistence wages. On pages thirteen through nineteen, when David begins describing the strike, he provides many statistics and quotations which support his portrayal of the strike as an example of class conflict resulting from inequities in the city's large-scale private industry. Thus far the essay is unified and supports the three points Dr. Montgomery had written on David's second draft--"capitalism unjust in [the city] in 1917," "labor recognizes it," and "growth of labor class consciousness."

However, starting on page twenty--ironically, just a few sentences after the point where David had been in his early July interview, when he was confident that his "breakthrough" would assure that the rest of his thesis would go well--the thesis begins going downhill. David must acknowledge that the strike's violence is due not largely to class conflict but to intra-labor conflict, although he claims that the violence "does indicate the extremes involved even at this embryonic stage of southeastern industrial labor relations." From this point on, the concept of class conflicts erupting over inequities caused by developing industry simply disappears, and the paper degenerates into a narration with no apparent
theme. On page thirty-four, at the start of his final paragraph, David returns to his earlier themes. But his final sentence, attempting to emphasize the strike as a harbinger of bigger things to come, almost loses sight not only of the controlling idea from earlier in the paper, but also of the subject itself. After a quotation from a labor leader encouraging the city’s workers to "carry on in this fight," David concludes, "His words stood as a portent of the growth of class conflict--conflict that would boil over seventeen years later in the violent southern textile strikes that would shake [the city] to its very foundation." Given that the 1934 strike is not mentioned anywhere else in the thesis and is not "common knowledge" even to the residents of the city in which it took place, David’s concluding sentence seems confusing. It is almost as if, never having reconciled himself to having run out of time, David ended his thesis with a transition to a section he never wrote, a section comparing the 1934 strike to the 1917 one.

Overall, then, David’s paper supports Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s views regarding the importance of finding a focus during the search process, prior to writing the first draft. Failing to find such a focus during his search process, David not only encountered difficulty writing the paper, but also, despite massive effort during revision, ended up with a paper that only intermittently seems focused around a central idea.
Feelings on Completion

All three students stated that after they made the final changes required by their committees and turned in the final copies, they experienced a tremendous feeling of accomplishment. Each student, however, described that feeling differently, in ways that fit that student’s personality.

Helen, in the already-quoted statement about suffering to do the thesis her way, emphasized solving her own problems and not relying on someone else’s structure. Vijay emphasized external recognition. "It’s a tremendous feeling to have your name on a completed project that will be bound and added to the collection," he said. "You’re an author." David emphasized conflict, learning experiences, and socioeconomic class:

I didn’t like feeling so rushed and desperate at the end. And what I had to do was take that negative energy and focus it, turn it into more positive energy, which was a hell of a learning experience. And after I turned in that final copy, I walked past the library on my way back to my car, and for the first time in a long time, I felt, "I'm a success." There was some guilt, too, because of all the people who haven’t had the opportunities I've had, but guilt is a required part of being Jewish. Mostly I felt great. I had this goal, and I did it. I could’ve been out drinking and chasing the babes, but this was much more satisfying. I showed that I could complete a long-term project. And when I graduated and people were coming up and congratulating me, I felt like I deserved it.

One final point about the students’ reactions afterward: the Kerrigan Award went to the English major rather than to Vijay. Vijay was disappointed, even bitter: he had heard and been persuaded by a rumor that the English major had won only
because the award had gone to a science major the previous year. At about the same time that he learned of the award committee’s decision, he also learned that he had not been accepted into Harvard’s medical school, an even bigger disappointment. During his final interview, however, he finished discussing these matters by saying, "But Dr. Carter keeps telling me that he’s convinced I can do great things in medical research. I wish I had won the Kerrigan Award, but the support of Dr. Carter means more to me than any award ever could."

**Conclusion**

The students’ processes suggest that highly competent undergraduates, given sufficient time and encouragement, define research-writing tasks in ways similar to the ways their professors do, rather than in the less ambitious ways Schwegler and Shamoon describe as characteristic of most undergraduates: as original research conducted to seek truth and contribute to the ongoing conversation of a discourse community (817-21). Their processes emphatically support the views of Flower, Hayes, and their colleagues that competent students invoke rhetorical reading and writing strategies which allow them to solve more ambitious problems than less accomplished students do while reading and writing. Their processes also support Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s view that for academic writing, writers ideally should find their focus during the search process and should begin writing the first
draft with that focus already at least tentatively established. The students' processes do not, however, support Kuhlthau's and Stotsky's view, based on a study of high school students writing shorter papers, that the search process is largely separate from the writing process; instead, the students' processes support Ford, Rees, and Ward's theory that longer, more elaborate research-based essays require different competencies than do shorter, simpler research-based essays, with one of the required competencies for longer papers being the ability to handle considerable overlap among research, writing, and revision. The experiences of the students, as well as the testimony of their advisors, underscore Larson's views about the profound differences between researching and writing a "generic" research paper and conducting and writing about research in any particular academic discipline. Yet the students' experiences do not necessarily support Larson's contention that instruction in a "generic" research paper should be abolished from the composition classroom. David, in particular, would probably have benefited from both composition's "generic-paper" instruction and from the history department's more discipline-specific instruction, as he himself ruefully admitted during his final interview.

Beyond any applications to already-established theories, the material in this chapter demonstrates the profound gap between the work of undergraduates and that of graduate students, let alone between the work of undergraduates and
that of their professors. The three students discussed in this chapter were all honors students, seniors bound for post-baccalaureate instruction, working on projects in their academic majors, projects which they had the better part of a year to complete. Yet in spite of their ambitious definitions of their tasks and their sophisticated reading and writing strategies, David required massive last-minute help to produce a paper even partly unified by a controlling idea, and Helen produced a partly plagiarized paper containing concepts she had difficulty explaining orally. Only Vijay, repeatedly described as exceptional even among exceptionally competent students, produced a wholly successful (although not perfect) thesis. As Williams and Colomb point out, even the best students encounter difficulty when they must write as apprentice members of discourse communities new to them. Instructors must expect these difficulties and recognize that even the best students need help to fulfill their potentials. Moreover, administrators and teachers alike must support Writing Across the Curriculum programs, including writing courses designed for students in a particular major.

Helen’s plagiarism problems underscore a point which other chapters of this dissertation have already covered: we cannot view plagiarism simply in terms of stereotypically lazy or sleazy students buying a paper or procuring one from a fraternity file. Helen had a 3.8 GPA; she was writing on a topic within her major, after spending the better part of a
year conducting closely guided research on that topic; she worked hard on her thesis and expressed pride in the work she had done; more than anyone else in the entire sample, she viewed writing as an expression of one’s unique self; she expressed nothing but respect and admiration for Dr. Carter; and at the risk of my losing any pretense of objectivity, she was one of the nicest persons I encountered during my research, one who ended our final interview by saying it was "an honor" to be part of my study. It is accurate, as well as fashionable, to characterize many English teachers’ attitudes toward plagiarism as obsessive; but if this dissertation demonstrates anything, it is that there is no guarantee against plagiarism, no circumstance under which we can say, "It can’t happen here."

It would be a mistake, however, to end this chapter on a negative note. In spite of David’s and Helen’s problems, overall the three students produced essays far superior to the work produced by most college undergraduates and far superior by their own accounts to any essays they had previously written during their highly successful college careers. They took a big step toward closing the gap separating their work from the work of graduate students, and, beyond, of their professors. All three also took great pride in the hard work they had done and in the goals they had achieved. Overall, their initiations into their chosen discourse communities were highly successful.
Why did these three students work so hard and, for the most part, succeed so well? What, if anything, can college teachers take from the three students' rather idealized situations and apply to their own classrooms? Certainly, the three students had many advantages in upbringing, previous education, time available, and so forth, that many undergraduates lack. Nevertheless, certain elements in their success may be applied to the teaching of writing to undergraduates.

In part, the three students' hard work and overall success resulted from their being able to view their projects as real, original research, not mere exercises in assembling the already-known. Although most undergraduates are not prepared to create new knowledge through work in libraries or in laboratories, they may well be ready to create new knowledge through interviews or surveys if teachers will help them to develop appropriate projects and strategies. The Foxfire series, after all, originated in an English class populated largely by poor, non-college-bound high school students. We should give more thought to Richard Larson's point that research skills may be acquired in many settings besides libraries.

Second, perhaps when we assign long-term projects, we should also assure that our students periodically report their progress (or lack of it) to someone who will not be grading them--their peers, perhaps--to gain some of the advantages
three students reportedly enjoyed from taking part in my study. Collaborative-writing theorists make much the same suggestion.

Finally, to the extent that our energy and our teaching loads allow, we must learn to mentor individuals rather than simply teaching classes. Dr. Carter and Dr. Montgomery were both highly demanding, sometimes even sharply critical. But they both cared deeply about the students. Recall Dr. Carter’s intense pride in Vijay’s accomplishments and his warm reaction to Helen’s improved second draft, as well as Dr. Montgomery’s repeatedly stating his regret and his willingness to assume more than his share of the blame (if "blame" is even appropriate) for David’s difficulties. Just as important, the students knew that their advisors cared about them and their work. Despite their frequent statements that they needed to show that they could work independently, the students were powerfully motivated by their mentors’ concerns. At different times during their interviews, after having difficulty explaining a concept related to their research, both Vijay and Helen said almost exactly the same thing: "I’m glad Dr. Carter didn’t hear that. He’d kill me. I’d better work harder." On another occasion, Vijay said, "I need to produce a good thesis, not only for myself but for Dr. Carter. He’s helped me so much that my work not only reflects on me, it reflects on him, too." Granted, we cannot lavish on each of our students the time and energy that the two mentors devoted
to the three students discussed in this chapter. We can, however, provide all of our students with assignments meaningful enough and challenging enough to require the best in them, we can work with them to help them rise to those challenges, and we can let them realize that we care how they do. If we do these things, we can help our students to become better writers and stronger, more self-confident human beings.
Notes

1. David's Budweiser box full of documents does, in fact, contain a page in which David describes the shooting in detail, using present-tense verbs. The page seems written more for self-expression than for possible inclusion in the thesis.

2. At the time of an interview on May 26, David had not yet selected a specific strike to investigate. By his next interview, on June 17, he was investigating the 1917 textile workers' strike, even though he knew it was the "wrong" strike.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Review of the Study

This study was largely a response to four realities:

--The research-paper assignment occupies an important position in most composition programs.

--Very little research has been conducted on the processes of students as they complete research-paper assignments.

--Such research as does exist indicates a gap between teachers' attitudes toward the research paper and students' views of the research paper.

--Well-run ethnographically-oriented studies can produce portrayals which the persons being studied will accept and can also produce data teachers can understand, accept, and apply to their classrooms.

Thus, this study has examined in considerable detail the processes of students as they completed research-paper assignments, in the hope that such an investigation could bridge the gap between students' and teachers' perspectives.

As its central research question, the study asks:

--What do students do, physically, mentally, and emotionally, from the time they receive the research-paper assignment until they hand in the finished paper, and why?

Of course, any description of actual conditions invites speculation regarding how those conditions might be improved. Thus, a second major research question guiding this study asks:
--Under what circumstances, if at all, should college teachers require their students to write research papers?

To approach such sweeping questions, the study examined a larger sample of students than is usual for qualitative research and used a wide range of data-collection procedures. The sample consisted of twenty-four students, ranging from Basic Writers at an open-door community college to honors students completing senior theses at a somewhat selective University. Eight classes were represented in the study: a Basic Writing class, three First-Year Composition classes, an Advanced Composition class, a sociology class, and independent-study classes in American history and in chemistry. Areas of investigation included the social, institutional, and pedagogical influences on the students' processes of completing research-paper assignments. Data-collection procedures included:

--observation of some of the classes for which the students were completing the research papers;

--observation of individual conferences between the students and their teachers;

--interviews with the students, their teachers, and reference librarians at the community college and the University;

--observation of some of the students as they sought sources in libraries;

--reading-aloud protocols in which some of the students voiced their thoughts as they read sources for their papers;

--examination of the notes, drafts, and final copies produced by the students, including the grades and written comments from the teachers.
By examining a large, diverse sample of students and by employing a wide range of data-collection procedures, this study has attempted to combine the "thick description" characteristic of qualitative research with the large-scale perspective characteristic of cross-sectional surveys, thus creating an in-depth portrait of students' research-paper experiences throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

In interpreting data, the study has relied heavily on these conceptual frameworks:

--Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of "heteroglossia," that is, of the many "voices" which influence the author of any written or spoken text;

--Robert A. Schwegler and Linda K. Shamoon’s descriptions of the ways students and professors define the research paper;

--Linda Flower, John Hayes, and their colleagues’ work on the role of task representation in research-based writing;

--Sandra Stotsky’s theories regarding the nature of planning in research-based writing;

--James E. Ford, Sharla Rees, and David L. Ward’s view that relatively long, complex research papers require different competencies from those required by shorter, less organizationally complex research papers.

This chapter will now summarize the results of the study. The results in a Basic Writing class will be discussed first, followed by the results in two First-Year Composition classes in which writing focused on literary topics; a First-Year Composition class in which students were encouraged to write on topics of personal interest to them; an Advanced Composition class; and independent study classes in which
honors students completed senior theses.

Basic Writing

The six Basic Writing students’ experiences revealed a discrepancy between goals and processes on the one hand and results on the other. The students generally set impressive goals: most seemed eager to learn about their subjects and about research-paper writing, one adopted the rather complex rhetorical strategy of arguing against drug legalization while conceding that such legalization had some advantages, and one attempted to argue against expert opinion on his subject, steroid use. They also generally seemed relatively sophisticated about the writing process, seeking favorable environments for composing, revising their way through multiple drafts, and in interviews discussing such matters as the role of the subconscious in focusing an essay and the need for an objective viewpoint toward one’s work during revision. Unfortunately, the students’ abilities to express themselves on paper did not always keep pace with their sometimes impressive goals and processes. Thus, the students’ final drafts were riddled with errors in logic, as for example when one student’s paper repeatedly seemed to favor drug legalization in one sentence and oppose it in the next, without so much as a "but" to prepare the reader for the shift; the final drafts often reflected a failure to narrow topics and a failure to organize, as when one student wrote a paragraph about the features of a new model of computer,
followed by a paragraph about computers in the workplace, followed by a paragraph about computer viruses, uniting these three with the thesis statement "Computers have advantages and disadvantages"; the final drafts often contained the kinds of errors Mina Shaughnessy described as characterizing Basic Writers, as in sentences such as "Things that need to be examined are the long term effects of drug usage do to their bodies, friends, and above all their families" or "Eric’s abusive behavior toward his daughter, Hilary begin seven months after he petition the court for overnight visits"; and most of the students did not consistently paraphrase, summarize, or quote accurately, nor did they consistently cite sources accurately enough for a reader to find the cited material in a library.

The teacher of the class also revealed a discrepancy between goals and process on one hand and product on the other. Although originally trained in a discipline other than English and not a writing teacher by first choice, the teacher had learned to conduct a workshop class and enjoyed good rapport with her students. However, her discomfort with teaching writing was manifested in her reluctance to show up for class on time (or at all) and in her emphasis on an essay’s surface features--headings, spacings, number of paragraphs, number of sentences per paragraph, and correctness of spelling, punctuation, and grammar--almost to the exclusion of anything else. Furthermore, her lack of subject-area
background was manifested in her difficulties with reading, spelling, and citation format, difficulties which hindered her both in the classroom and in evaluating student texts. Finally, in grading the papers the teacher flatly contradicted the grading criteria she had described both in the classroom and when interviewed for this study. Overall, the Basic Writers' experience dramatizes institutional influences on students' writing: the community college's administration had removed the teacher from classrooms in her field of expertise and, apparently trying to find a "safe" place to put her, had required her to instruct high-risk students in a course she lacked both the background and the desire to teach.

First-Year Composition--Literary Topics

If the experiences of the community college's Basic Writing students dramatize some of the problems inherent when teachers must teach outside their field of expertise, the experiences of the community college's five First-Year-Composition students in the sample dramatize some of the problems inherent when composition students must write within the teacher's field of expertise--in this case, literature. One of the standard arguments favoring literary topics for composition essays is that English teachers are trained in literature and should teach within their areas of expertise. However, the teachers' very expertise caused problems for the students. For example, the two English teachers described in this chapter provided their open-door community-college
students with lists of suggested topics such as "Stream of Consciousness (Refer to James Joyce or William Faulkner)" and "Psychological Realism in Dostoevsky's Novels." Students were required to choose topics from these lists unless they submitted alternative topics for the teacher’s approval almost two months before the paper was due. When interviewed, the community college's librarians, who had to help students search for material on these topics, unanimously criticized the topic lists not only of these two teachers but of the community college's second-semester-composition teachers in general.

The literary topics strongly affected the ways the English teachers defined the task for their students. Both teachers defined the papers as purely informative, with no need for the students to generate their own ideas or express their own views. This unambitious task representation matches the way that students view the research-paper assignment, according to Schwegler and Shamoon, rather than the way that teachers view it. Yet at the same time that the teachers defined the task as informative writing, at least one teacher assumed that the students would not have read the works about which they would be writing their informative papers; thus, the students were advised to rely on Masterplots and similar plot-summarizing reference works.

Most of the students selected topics from the lists and approached those topics unenthusiastically. Their approaches
were influenced not only by the literary-topic requirement, but also by their attempts to apply the traditional pedagogy they had encountered in these classes and in previous ones. For example, even though the paper was not required to be a five-paragraph theme, most of the students seemed determined to produce three-part thesis statements, and one student gave up on the project in part because he did not believe he could write sufficiently detailed paragraphs to reach the required number of words in five paragraphs. The students also seemed convinced that their English teachers would grade their papers primarily based on mechanical correctness and on citation format rather than on content or style; one student, in fact, stated that he avoided long sentences in order to minimize his chances of losing points for comma errors.

Two of the students, however, to some degree overcame the impositions of the classroom situation. One, having gained permission to write on a topic not found on the list, a topic reflecting his inspiration at having seen the musical Les Miserables, produced a paper which included a few of his own theories. Another, having gained permission to depart from the literary-topic requirement altogether and instead write a paper reflecting her intense environmental concerns, produced a persuasive paper of such exemplary quality that it has been used as the sample student paper in a well-known composition handbook. In producing the paper, this student followed a process which perfectly fits Stotsky's description of focus
formulation for research papers as taking place through an interaction of writing and thinking before the student has begun writing the first draft.

This latter student's paper, when turned in both to one of the English teachers and to a sociology teacher, received only a number grade, with no written comments from either teacher. In fact, although most of the papers examined in this chapter received either A's or B's, not one received a single favorable written comment from the teachers.

First-Year Composition--General-Interest Topics

The University described in this study, in contrast, focused the second semester of First-Year Composition not on literature, but on the research paper itself. Students were required to write only three essays outside of class for grades during the semester--but each of the three was a research paper of five to seven pages, citing at least ten sources. Because they were enrolled in composition during a shortened-semester summer session, five of the six students discussed in Chapter Six had to turn in their finished research papers only nine days after receiving the assignment. (The sixth student, for reasons discussed in Chapter Six, had thirteen days.) However, they were taught by an energetic, student-oriented teacher who gave them considerable freedom in selecting their topics, focused class time on the students and their writing, and encouraged them to move beyond an informative aim through exercises designed to get students to
react to their sources rather than merely summarizing them.

The students unanimously appreciated having the freedom to pursue their interests, favorably describing both their teacher and the assignment. However, despite the teacher’s efforts, the students’ papers were largely the cited summaries of information described by Schwegler and Shamoon as typifying students’ approaches to the research-paper assignment. Moreover, most of the students often failed to cite information accurately enough for a reader to find the source in a library and turn to the relevant pages, and three of the six handed in papers with substantial amounts of plagiarism, with from 20 percent to 90 percent of the paper consisting of largely verbatim copies of passages from sources, without quotation marks. Although the students were required to hand in photocopies of their sources along with the papers, in no case were the inaccurate citations or the plagiarism detected.

Also, in response to the teacher’s preference for evidence of extensive revision, some of the students attempted to produce an image which would please the teacher—sometimes printing out hard copy in mid-draft to give the impression of having written more drafts of the paper, for example. The one student who quietly defied the teacher by cultivating an image as a non-reviser received the lowest grade of the six on his paper, although his paper was rated by a panel of other English teachers as one of the better papers in the group and although data from the study suggested that in fact he almost
certainly revised more extensively than some, perhaps most, of the other students in the sample.

Advanced Composition

The experiences of the four Advanced Composition students in the sample demonstrate that while problems can arise when teachers assign tasks beyond their students’ abilities, they can also arise when teachers assign tasks which demand too little of their students. The students, mostly college juniors, were required to write an 800-to-1000-word paper with a purely informative aim, citing three to five sources. Although Schwegler and Shamoon describe most college students as defining the research paper as essentially informative, most of the Advanced Composition students described the informative aim as somewhat constricting. Some also felt constricted by the 1000-word limit, and one felt constricted by consciously writing with a specific aim at all. Perhaps because they felt relatively uncommitted to the assignment, some of the students responded rather cynically to the teacher’s written comments on their rough drafts, making exactly the changes suggested by the teacher, although they did not always believe that those suggested changes improved the paper, and making virtually no other changes between rough draft and final copy. Moreover, the students who responded to the teacher’s suggestions in this way were the ones who received the highest grades on the finished essays.
In many ways, the teacher approached the assignment in ways most composition theorists would approve. The assignment was framed within an explicit rhetorical context, with a specific aim of discourse given and with students required to specify an audience; in-class writing was used to help students generate topics and think about their progress and their possible strategies; the teacher conferred with students individually during the in-class writing sessions; students peer edited each other’s rough drafts; and the teacher provided detailed responses to the students’ rough drafts. Moreover, most of the students produced papers free from many of the more serious drawbacks found in the papers produced by most of the Basic Writers and the First-Year-Composition students. Nevertheless, the Advanced Composition students seemed largely unenthusiastic about their papers, largely because they felt limited by elements most composition specialists would praise: the specified rhetorical aim and the teacher’s comments on the rough draft.

Honors Students

The sample included three honors students who were completing senior theses within their majors. All three defined their tasks in ways that, according to Schwengler and Shamoon, typify the attitudes not of college students but of professors and their discourse in academic journals—as original explorations intended to further an academic community’s knowledge and to add to that community’s published
conversation. When reading their sources, two of the three also were acutely aware of their sources' rhetorical situations and of ways they could use their sources to support and establish the significance of their own work. In these behaviors, the students supported not only Flower, Hayes, and their colleagues' point that competent students set ambitious goals through sophisticated rhetorical reading and writing strategies, but also Bakhtin's point that the author must subordinate other textual "voices" to his or her own intentions. However, while all three students worked much harder on the project than do most undergraduates and produced texts far superior to the work of most undergraduates, two of the three encountered considerable difficulty with the project, thus supporting Williams and Colomb's point that even students who have been highly successful at previous academic levels, when called upon to write as apprentices in discourse communities new to them, encounter many of the difficulties characteristic of far less experienced writers. These difficulties, as well as the problems with basic structure encountered by one student who had been exempted from previous research-writing courses, suggest the need for courses introducing upper-division students to the research methods and research-writing conventions of their disciplines.

Of the three honors students, the one who encountered the least difficulty and who wrote the most successful thesis was the one who most clearly formed a focus prior to writing his
first draft, a finding which supports Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s views that students ideally should find a focus for their research papers during the search process, prior to beginning to write the paper. However, to some extent all three students continued to conduct research even after beginning to write their first drafts, a finding which contradicts Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s assertions that in research-based writing, the search process is largely separate from and prior to the writing process. One explanation for this contradiction is that Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s assertions are based on a study of high school students writing relatively short research papers, not college seniors writing theses. Compared to students discussed in other parts of this study, the three honors students used considerably different processes, with much more overlap among research, drafting, and revision, as well as much more rereading of earlier sections of the paper. This finding supports Ford, Rees, and Ward’s view that longer, more elaborate research-based essays require different competencies than do shorter, simpler ones. The three students’ processes also supported Kuhlthau’s and Stotsky’s views that the focus should emerge prior to the writing of the first draft in one other way: although all three students reported moments of insight occurring during the writing process, evidence suggested that the "discoveries" were in fact rediscoveries or perhaps elaborations on ideas
the students had already expressed in previous writings or interviews.

Two of the three honors students were completing theses in chemistry. The processes of these students dramatize certain elements of learning to write in the sciences: the emphasis on conciseness rather than on elaboration; the enormous influence of the mentor, who supervised the laboratory work and in effect selected the students’ topics for them; and the crucial role of the laboratory notebook in teaching students to write and think like scientists.

Finally, the students’ processes suggest that for long, elaborate writing projects, the Hawthorne effect may be a helpful teaching device. Although none of the other twenty-one students in the sample reported that being part of this study had any effect on their researching and writing processes, all three honors students reported that taking part in the study helped them with their theses, by providing them with intermediate deadlines without the pressure of reporting to the person who would grade them and by encouraging them to think about and to talk about their research projects and their writing processes.

Having summarized the study as a whole and the findings unique to each subgroup within my sample, I will now turn to more general considerations, organizing my presentation around the study’s two central research questions, as listed on pages 615 and 616.
What Students Do

Individual Expression and Social Discourse

On one hand, this study could be used to support the view, often advocated by Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, Don Murray, and others, that the writer is a unique individual whose writing is a vehicle for self-expression. While Ms. Kramer (Chapter Six) was the only teacher in the sample to approach the research-paper assignment primarily as a form of self-expression, students in all of the "Results" chapters sometimes approached the assignment in that way. From David’s decision to write about labor-management conflict (Chapter Eight) to Gary’s determination to argue that the benefits of steroid use outweigh the dangers (Chapter Four), from Jacki’s perfectionistic reworkings of her paper weeks before the due date to Greg’s writing his paper while listening to heavy-metal music and talking on the telephone the day before the paper was due (Chapter Five for both), from Martin’s determination to conform to his teacher’s smallest preferences (Chapter Seven) to Scott’s determination to defy his teacher’s strongest convictions (Chapter Six), the students at times seemed to be not so much completing assignments as revealing their personalities. Even something as seemingly dry as an informative essay about birdhouses, when examined closely, turns out to be in part a testament to Wesley’s love for his daughter and his fear that he will be unable to play an ongoing part in her life (Chapter Seven). Despite the
impersonal tone students are encouraged to adopt in their research papers, then, one could argue that those papers are documents of the students’ individuality.

At the same time, many parts of the study support the views of Kenneth Bruffee, Patricia Bizzell, and others who portray writing not as an expression of individuality but as an individual’s attempt to connect with others through acceptance into a discourse community. This view is most clearly supported in Chapter Eight, where the students enthusiastically pursued projects aimed at teaching them to think, research, and write like—or even as—chemists (Vijay and Helen) or historians (David). But even the students writing more "generic" research papers were often being groomed for acceptance into a research community: the community of undergraduate writers, themselves apprentices to the discourse communities in their academic majors. This apprenticeship to the college-writer discourse community was most openly present for the Basic Writing students discussed in Chapter Four, but the concept was also noticeable in the chapters focusing on First-Year Composition. In fact, many of the difficulties facing the First-Year Composition students who were writing on literary topics (Chapter Five) may be attributed to their being given an assignment designed to initiate them into the community of literary researchers and critics, a community they had no desire to join. Similarly, the lukewarm attitude most of the Advanced Composition
students expressed toward their assignment (Chapter Seven) may have stemmed largely from their receiving an assignment which seemed designed to initiate them into the college-writer discourse community, a community in which they had already thoroughly established themselves.

Finally, the findings at times may support the views of postmodernists who deny the concept of individuality and who view the writer as a social construct of the academy. The students' papers were greatly influenced by other "voices"—individual, institutional, and cultural discourses which sometimes complemented and sometimes contradicted one another. These voices often influenced not only the students' behavior in completing the research-paper assignments but also their overall educational prospects.

At the broadest level, cultural messages may ensure that in the classroom, people generally do about as well as their parents have done. (Or interpreting more narrowly, one could argue that parental messages are often a decisive factor in students' attitudes toward education.) Of the six Basic Writing students in the sample, none had a parent who had graduated from a four-year college; only two had a parent who had graduated from high school; and four had at least one parent who had not progressed beyond the seventh grade. The twelve First-Year-Composition students, less "high-risk" than the Basic Writing students but less certain of graduation than the Advanced Composition students or the students working on
senior theses, tended to be the offspring of high school graduates: only two of the twelve First-Year Composition students in the sample reported that neither parent had graduated from high school, but only three reported that either parent had graduated from college. Of the four Advanced Composition students in the sample, three reported that both parents had graduated from college. Of the three Honors Scholars completing senior theses, two reported that both of their parents had graduated from college and that at least one parent had earned a graduate degree; one of those two was the son of two teachers, including a college professor with a doctorate, while the other reported that both of his parents had master’s degrees. One final comparison: only one of the seventeen students in either Basic Writing or First-Year Composition reported that both parents had graduated from college, compared with five of the seven students in Advanced Composition or in senior-thesis courses. While these samples are admittedly small, the contrast is clear.

To some extent, the previous paragraph’s figures undoubtedly reflect parental influence, as students were influenced by the climate toward learning which prevailed in their families as they grew up. The figures may also, however, reflect economic realities: while the students could not have provided precise data about parental income levels even if I had asked, various Basic Writers and First-Year Composition students named their parents’ occupations as
welder, secretary, nurse's aide, and so forth, while the Advanced Composition students and Honors Scholars described their parents as company presidents, college professors, hospital administrators, and so forth. Moreover, four of the seven Advanced Composition students or Honors Scholars had attended private high schools, while none of the other seventeen students in the sample reported having done so, a contrast suggesting differences both in parental income and in parental concern about education.

The discourse of educational institutions often seemed to exacerbate the gap between the haves and the have-nots in the sample. In *Errors and Expectations*, Mina Shaughnessy notes that because of the increase of underprepared students on college campuses, "English teachers have begun to realize that little in their background has prepared them to teach writing to someone who has not already learned how to do it" (121). Similarly, educational discourse seems to say, "Writing should be taught only to those who already know how to write." In general, the less successful students in the sample, besides having less advantageous family backgrounds, had been required to complete far fewer writing assignments prior to college. Most of the Basic Writers, along with one First-Year-Composition student who had earlier been required to take Basic Writing, said that they had been required to write very few essays or else no essays at all in high school. None of the other students in the sample made a similar claim.
Moreover, although some students could not remember one way or the other, only one-third of the Basic Writers and First-Year-Composition students at the community college recalled having been required to write a research paper in high school (and for at least one student the "research papers" were only one or two paragraphs long). In contrast, two-thirds of the First-Year-Composition students at the University, as well as every Advanced Composition student or Honors Scholar who recalled one way or the other, had written one or more research papers in high school.

Nor did dramatic differences in instruction cease once the students enrolled in college. The Basic Writers, who probably needed quality writing instruction more than any other group in the sample, were taught by a professor who was somewhat reluctantly teaching outside her academic specialty despite clearly lacking necessary background. The Freshman Composition students were taught either by community-college professors burdened with five classes per term, mostly composition classes, or by a part-time faculty member who had to sandwich her teaching obligations between work at a full-time non-academic job. In contrast, the Advanced Composition students were taught by a professor whose somewhat lighter teaching load permitted her to work with individual students and their rough drafts, while the Honors Scholars were taught by professors whose endowed-position status allowed them time for original research and publication, as well as for careful
mentoring of the Honors Scholars. The institutions had created a hierarchy in writing instruction, as well as a hierarchy in faculty conditions. Moreover, even in this small sample, the faculty hierarchy broke along lines of gender and race, with a black woman at the bottom and two white men at the top. According to Richard Hendrix, "Writing and access to writing improvement is as good an indicator of the difference between, say, white collar and blue collar career tracks as we are likely to find" (53). Even with its limited sample, this study emphatically supports Hendrix's observation.

Perhaps the best way to synthesize these competing viewpoints--the writer as expressive individual, the writer as discourse-community apprentice, the writer as social and institutional construct--is to return to a Bakhtinian perspective. When students write research papers, their texts are influenced by many other voices, not only the voices of other authors they encounter during their research, but also the discourse of family and friends, of the educational institutions the students attend, even of the culture itself. Ideally, as Bakhtin says, the author's intentions dominate the text, and the author orchestrates other voices to serve his or her own purpose. In this study, the extent to which the individual students' intentions dominated their texts is open to interpretation. One could argue that even the most passive student--Larry in Chapter Five, for example--dominated his text by manipulating teachers and librarians into doing most
of his work for him, so that Larry's research paper reflects Larry's orchestration of a librarian's research skills, his teacher's organizational skills, and his own flat sentence structure and inability or unwillingness to make connections among the data selected for him. Or one could argue that even a student strongly determined to write the paper her way--Helen in Chapter Eight, for example--finally produced a paper which reflected mainly the voices of the discourse community of chemists which remained her implied audience, the voice of her mentor on the research project ("I'm starting to write like he talks"), and the voice of the research assistant who had preceded her in the research project, as well as the familial, educational, and cultural discourses which had provided her with the opportunities and the motivation necessary for a graduate-school-bound honors student. In summary, each student is the site for the often-competing aims and goals of others, and each student's writing reflects both the conflict among the aims and goals of others, and the student's struggle to control and synthesize the voices which compete for primacy in the text.

Institutional Influences

While conditions for writing instruction varied with the students' educational level, with the Basic Writers at the bottom of the pecking order and the Honors Scholars at the top, they also varied between the two educational institutions described in this study. Indeed, this study confirms Edward
White's statement that the "campus climate for writing" varies dramatically from college to college (1). At the community college examined in this study,

--all three English teachers in the sample required five-paragraph themes at one time or another during the semester, with one requiring three-part thesis statements as well;

--one of the English teachers set minimum and maximum numbers of sentences per paragraph;

--the second-semester composition class focused so strongly on literary analysis rather than on students' writing that some students called it "my lit class";

--the one "subject-area" teacher in the sample provided no research-paper instruction beyond specifying subject matter, length, and number of sources;

--only one of the four teachers initiated individual conferences with students, and none of the four provided written responses to students' rough drafts;

--none of the four teachers wrote for publication himself or herself;

--perhaps most significant of all, the students seemed to accept these as the conditions to be expected in school.

In contrast, at the University examined in this study,

--none of the four teachers required students to develop a specific number of main points, to write a specific number of paragraphs, or to write a specific number of sentences per paragraphs;

--the students' writing projects were invariably the primary focus of instruction;

--all four teachers initiated individual conferences with the students, and three of the four provided written responses to students' rough drafts;

--all four teachers regularly wrote for publication.

Some of this difference in institutional context may be attributed to the University's more favored socioeconomic
position, with lighter teaching loads freeing faculty members to devote more time to each individual student, to pursue their own publishing interests, and to keep current in their disciplines (including composition theory). Some of the difference, however, may be traced to the individuals in each school. In particular, the Writing Program Administrator may play a key role in determining a school’s climate for writing, both by influencing what is taught, and by whom, within the composition program and by working with subject-area teachers to establish a campus-wide writing program. It is perhaps no coincidence that the community college had no Writing Program Administrator, while the University had a Director of Composition who enthusiastically promoted recent composition theory and who taught a graduate-level Composition Methods course required of all part-time composition instructors. In any event, the institution was in effect one more "voice," and a particularly influential one, in determining what students were expected to do, and thus what they did, in completing research-paper assignments.

While the Writing Program Administrator (or the lack of one) is an important factor in a campus’s climate for writing, within the individual classroom the teacher becomes a dominant figure in influencing what students do. As we shift our attention to the individual classroom, we also shift from focusing exclusively on this study’s first research question ("What do students do in completing research-paper
assignments, and why do they do it?"") to focusing primarily on this study's second research question ("Under what circumstances, if at all, should college teachers require research papers of their students?").

The Research Paper in the College Curriculum

The Research Paper in First-Year Composition

When I began this study, I slightly favored the idea of requiring students to write traditional research papers during First-Year Composition, as well as requiring essays citing at least a few sources in Basic Writing. When viewed from the Platonic-ideal perspective teachers often adopt when discussing pedagogical methods divorced from specific classroom situations, the research-paper assignment seemed an ideal way to sharpen students' abilities to locate and evaluate information, thus initiating students as apprentice scholars. As I conclude the study, however, I have far more reservations about the research paper's role in First-Year Composition, at least as the research paper is currently taught. Data from this study reflect everyday classroom reality, a reality in which institutional schedules left students, many of whom held down full-time jobs in addition to taking classes, with only nine days from assignment date until due date for a five-to-seven-page, ten-source paper; in which composition students in an open-door institution had little choice but to write on topics such as Gerard Manley Hopkins's use of sprung rhythm and the difference between folk epic and
literary epic; and in which the teachers assigning research papers struggled with five-course teaching loads, or with teaching part-time while working full-time at another job, or with teaching outside their fields of expertise. Given these circumstances, one should not be surprised when the students and the teachers handle the assignment in less than ideal fashion. Finally, however, it seems unwise to advocate the research-paper assignment simply because of its potential under ideal but non-existent conditions.

Occasionally the research-paper assignment achieves impressive results even under imperfect conditions. Although lacking extensive research-paper experience and although facing the same difficult classroom conditions the other students faced, Jacki (Chapter Five) produced excellent final products while learning a great deal and gaining pride and self-confidence from the process. Too often, however, students lacking commitment to the assignment made half-hearted efforts, while other students made sincere efforts yet produced papers marred by lack of focus, factual errors, or extensive plagiarism. Equally discouraging, some of the most defective papers in the sample received some of the highest grades as overburdened teachers failed to notice such items as the fact that a paper consisted almost entirely of verbatim copying, without quotation marks, from photocopied pages the student had turned in along with the paper.
Yet while this study provides little support for the traditional research paper in First-Year Composition, it does not necessarily follow that assignments requiring students to conduct research and to write about that research have no place in the composition program. As Richard Larson has pointed out, one can teach research-based writing in composition without assigning "generic" research papers. Students surely stand a better chance of succeeding in college if they emerge from First-Year Composition having acquired some skills in researching and in research-based writing; equally important, if assignments ask students to move beyond retrieving and summarizing others' views and instead encourage them to interact with the ideas and implications in texts or in other data, then those assignments hold enormous potential for developing students' critical thinking skills. However, given the gap we have seen between ideal-world potential and real-world results, perhaps what are needed are relatively simple, small-scale assignments which encourage research skills and critical-thinking skills.

Data from this study suggest that in many academic disciplines, the ability to write intelligently about the key texts on a given subject may be more important than the ability to unearth large numbers of sources. Perhaps, then, composition teachers should avoid the traditional approach of defining the research-writing assignment in terms of a certain minimum number of sources. Instead, they might consider
requiring each student to select an important key text from within his or her probable major and to write a critical analysis of that text, or requiring each student to write an evaluative comparison of two key texts which express competing viewpoints on a given issue. Given the importance of rhetorical reading skills and of the ability to evaluate the claims of authorities, composition students might also benefit from an assignment requiring them to read one or two texts and to write an essay evaluating those texts for possible bias, for authoritativeness, and for potential usefulness in a longer paper. Even composition teachers who choose to retain the traditional research-paper assignment might wish to employ some of the assignments suggested in this paragraph as preparation for, rather than in place of, the research paper.

Composition teachers would also do well to keep in mind that there are many kinds of research, not all of which involve the library. While composition teachers cannot expect their students to write about original laboratory research as Honors Scholars Vijay and Helen (Chapter Eight) did, most first-year college students are ready to conduct personal-interview research. Students generally enjoy conducting person-interview research; indeed, many students in the sample attempted to conduct such research, sometimes even in classes in which the teacher had not mentioned this kind of research in class. With help from the teacher, many composition students may also be capable of devising surveys or
questionnaires for research as well. Some composition teachers may wish to combine short papers relying on field research with short papers involving critical analysis or rhetorical evaluation of one or two key texts, thus allowing their students to experience many kinds of research.

As Larson and others have pointed out, research methods and research-writing conventions are largely discipline-specific, thus making it possible that training composition students in completing a "generic" research paper will not have much carry-over value during students' later coursework. Yet as Chapter Five of this study demonstrates, when the composition-class research-paper assignment is not "generic" but is tied to the discipline in which the composition teacher was trained—often literary studies—the results can be disastrous. Rather than vainly attempting to prepare students for discipline-specific research, perhaps First-Year Composition teachers should be content with exposing students to various ways of conducting research and to the critical thinking required for such research.

The Research Paper in Other Disciplines

Writing-across-the-curriculum advocates have often lamented that when content-area professors are asked to add writing to their courses, they seem to think almost exclusively in terms of the traditional research paper (see White 78, for example), and these advocates are certainly correct that other kinds of writing assignments remain
underemployed in the content areas. Nevertheless, the research paper remains a defensible content-area assignment, particularly in upper-division courses in which the professor may reasonably assume that most students are, in fact, potentially apprentices interested in entering the discipline's discourse community. In such courses, the research paper can be an excellent vehicle to help students enter such a community. Equally important, this study demonstrates that many students want assignments which will require the best in them, assignments which will allow them the opportunity to feel proud of having met a challenge—and that many of those students view the research paper as the quintessential example of such an assignment. Indeed, more than one student in the sample mentioned the research paper as a key item in differentiating a college education of which one could feel proud from high school educations repeatedly described as "a joke."

If, as seems likely, the research-paper assignment remains common in most academic disciplines, then students need further training, after First-Year Composition, in the forms of research and of research-based writing characteristic of their academic majors. As already mentioned, Chapter Eight of this study demonstrates that even highly competent students are likely to encounter difficulty if required, without sufficient preparation, to attempt ambitious research projects within their academic disciplines. Granted, recent books in
composition such as *Contending with Words* and *Composition and Resistance* have counseled student writers to resist conforming their voices to the academy, and thus, implicitly, to resist the conventions of research-based writing in the disciplines. Yet to train students to write within the conventions of their disciplines does not force the students to continue to do so; rather, it frees the students to choose between conformity and non-conformity, rather than being restricted by their ignorance of how to conform. As Richard Rodriguez states in an essay about his childhood experiences with mastering English, the language expected of him in school, "In public . . . full individuality is achieved, paradoxically, by those who are able to consider themselves members of the crowd" (41). Perhaps courses in discipline-specific researching and writing should inform students that some theorists urge students to resist the discourse conventions of a given academic discipline; but students should emerge from those courses knowing how to conduct research and produce research-based writing within their majors, whether or not they choose to do so.

Besides implications regarding whether the research paper should be taught and at what level the research paper should be taught, this study also has implications regarding how the research paper should be taught. I turn now to examine those implications.
Teaching the Research Paper

This study has demonstrated how very powerful the teacher's voice is in shaping both the student's text and the student's attitude toward the assignment. While the teacher cannot control the influence of the personal, institutional, and cultural voices discussed earlier in this chapter, he or she wields great influence throughout the research-paper project, from the initial handout in which the range of acceptable topics is usually established through the grading of the finished product.

In order to teach the research paper effectively, teachers must attempt to understand perspectives other than their own. The data from this study demonstrate that teachers at times would be rather surprised to learn how students view elements of the assignment such as topic lists prepared by the teachers (Chapter Five) or the requirement to hand in all evidence of the writing process (Chapter Six). At least to some extent, journal entries and ungraded writings related to the research paper, as well as individual conferences and class time devoted to students' questions and problems, may help teachers to understand their students' perspectives. Within this study, the teachers who required research-paper-related journal entries or individual conferences came across in interviews as more aware of their students' processes, problems, and perspectives. Also, to the extent that the students' research remains library-centered, teachers
assigning research papers can benefit greatly from seeking the perspectives of their school’s reference librarians. As Chapter Five makes clear, the librarians may view the teachers’ assignments and the students’ processes of completing those assignments in radically different ways from the teachers. In addition, although this study has dealt only minimally with writing centers, surely writing center personnel also have distinctly different perspectives on teachers' assignments and on students' processes of completing those assignments, and surely teachers assigning research papers would benefit from familiarity with those perspectives.

Journals and preliminary conferences may help not only by familiarizing teachers with the students’ perspectives, but also by encouraging students to begin researching extensively and to find a focus for their papers well in advance of the due date. This study supports Stotsky and Kuhlthau's claim that ideally, a research paper’s focus should emerge during the search process, before the student begins to write the first draft. Throughout the sample, the students who eventually produced highly focused essays were able to describe accurately what the paper’s focus would be even before they began writing the paper, while students who began writing without a clear focus ended up turning in somewhat unfocused or completely unfocused papers. However, the discovery of focus during the search process is not necessarily what caused certain essays to be better focused
than others. While some of the Basic Writing students seemed unaware of the need for focus, most other students who did not find their focus prior to writing the rough draft had not invested a great deal of time, effort, or thought in the process. (David, discussed in Chapter Eight, is a noteworthy exception.) Besides journals and conferences, teachers might well set preliminary deadlines (although not so far in advance of the paper's due date as those set by the teachers discussed in Chapter Five) to assure that their students conduct research and seek a focus well before the deadline for the final draft. Traditionally, teachers have collected bibliography cards, note cards, and outlines on preliminary deadlines. However, the only students in the sample to produce bibliography cards or note cards were those required to do so by their teachers, although Jacki (Chapter Five) clearly would have used note cards even if not required to do so. Moreover, fewer than half of the students (and scarcely any of those assigned relatively brief papers) worked from outlines, and of the students who did use outlines, most drew up the outlines either just before writing the first draft or after they had begun writing. Thus, a teacher who requires note cards or an outline at a preliminary deadline runs the risk of seeming to the students to be out of touch with their processes and perspectives. Perhaps instead a brief literature-review essay or a brief proposal for the paper, both of which are discussed by Charles Bazerman in The
Informed Writer, might make a better preliminary document. While students are even less likely to produce such documents voluntarily than they are to use note cards voluntarily, the separate-essay nature of the literature review or the proposal prevents such a requirement from making the teacher appear to impose a set research method on the student; in addition, the separate-essay nature of the literature review or the proposal perhaps maximizes "the dynamic interaction between thinking and writing" which Stotsky suggests is crucial to the finding of a focus for a research-based essay prior to beginning the first draft ("On Developing" 207).

Of course, students are more likely to devote sufficient time to a project and to seek a focus for their research if they feel personally committed to the project, a point which underscores the importance of assigning tasks which capture students' interest. Both Chapter Five and Chapter Seven of this study describe cases in which the assignment itself lessened certain students' commitment to the task. In Chapter Five, the difficulty seemed to be that first-year students with no inherent interest in literature were required to write on rather complex literary topics. In Chapter Seven, the problem seemed to be that the more advanced students found the assigned 1000-word length limitation and the strictly-enforced informative aim rather restricting. In general, it is probably unwise to demand highly specialized research from students in First-Year Composition, a course required of
nearly all students, regardless of majors. More advanced students, on the other hand, probably are best served by discipline-specific research-writing assignments in courses in which the teacher can reasonably assume that many or most class members intend to major in the academic discipline being studied. Awareness of students' perspectives, then, implies that teachers should take into account students' interests, abilities, and limitations when they assign research-writing tasks.

Moreover, once the assignment has been made, teachers who are aware of their students' perspectives and processes can help their students abandon ineffective strategies. Joe's refusal to alter strategies which were not working (Chapter Five) and Wesley's testimony about his own past academic problems stemming from his refusal to alter strategies (Chapter Seven) both support Mike Rose's findings that inflexibly adhering to impractical strategies can lead to writer's block and missed deadlines ("Rigid"). Awareness of students' perspectives and processes allows the teacher to intervene beneficially in those perspectives and processes.

Nevertheless, the teacher needs to be careful that these interventions do not degenerate into a demand for excessive conformity from the student. In particular, the teacher needs to bear in mind how the grading system increases students' determination to do whatever is necessary to please the teacher, a determination which can problematize certain
teaching techniques highly valued by composition specialists. Despite being required to specify an audience for their papers, the Advanced Composition students (Chapter Seven) seemed to write largely for an audience of teacher-as-grader. The same students at times seemed to abdicate responsibility for their own revisions, instead simply making alterations suggested by the teacher, whether or not they agreed with those suggestions, and leaving the rest unchanged. In addition, the comments of peer editors seemed to lose whatever fragile authority they would otherwise have possessed as the students waited to see what the teacher had to say. Moreover, as Kari (Chapter Seven) and Larry (Chapter Five) demonstrate, once a teacher has critiqued a student’s rough draft, the student tends to assume that the teacher has pointed out every drawback in the draft and may resent it if the teacher writes any comments on the final copy criticizing problems which were already present, but which went unmarked, in the rough draft. This does not suggest that teachers should refuse to respond to their students’ rough drafts. However, perhaps teachers should simply give their overall reactions as readers and suggest general guidelines for revision, rather than suggesting detailed corrections of specific wordings. Teachers might also seek ways to factor other readers’ responses into the grades received by student papers, thus discouraging students from viewing their audience solely as the teacher and viewing the teacher’s preferences as the sole
criteria for revising.

It may be difficult, however, to convince students to adopt goals beyond pleasing the teacher in their writing. This study suggests that in terms of grades, defying a teacher's preferences is risky indeed, while conforming to those preferences pays off. Scott, who refused to conform to his teacher's demands for physical evidence of extensive revision, received the lowest grade and the only negative written comments on his paper of any of the students discussed in Chapter Six. The relatively negative reception his paper received from his teacher contrasts with the fact that his paper was ranked by a panel of First-Year Composition teachers in anonymous evaluations as one of the better papers produced by the six students from his class involved in the sample, as well as with the fact that evidence suggests that Scott may in fact have revised more extensively than did some of his classmates. Conversely (and disturbingly), the students who were most willing to accommodate teachers' demands, even when they saw those demands as somewhat whimsical--Steve and Cora running several mid-draft printouts exclusively to provide more pages of "writing process" to show their teacher (Chapter Six), Martin and Wesley changing their papers to accommodate their teacher's suggestions regardless of whether or not they agreed with those suggestions (Chapter Seven)--these students all received A's or A-'s on their papers. By its very nature, the grading system rewards certain behaviors and punishes
others; but surely independent, critical thinking skills are one goal of a liberal education in general and the research-paper assignment in particular. With the research paper as with other assignments, teachers must take care not to use the grading system simply to require conformity from their students.

Finally, data from this study suggest that teachers must recognize the possibility that when they assign research papers, many of the essays they receive will be to some degree plagiarized. While this study has demonstrated that many voices influence a student’s text, it has also demonstrated that the full contribution of many of those voices goes unacknowledged. Over half of the research papers in the sample were found to contain at least some passages copied verbatim or almost verbatim, without quotation marks, from sources; roughly one-fourth of the papers in the sample contain relatively large amounts of copying—a typed page or more, when all the plagiarized passages in a given paper are added together. Moreover, these figures may be lower than the actual totals, both because inaccurate citations or a failure to cite often precluded attempts to check a passage’s wording against a source’s wording and because a source check would not reveal most of the more premeditated varieties of plagiarism such as copying from a source not listed in one’s bibliography. In addition, these papers were written by students who had volunteered to participate in the study and
who knew that their papers would be scrutinized for the study, conditions which presumably would discourage plagiarism. Given the high rate of plagiarism even under these conditions, one can only wonder how frequently papers written under more usual conditions are plagiarized.

Published discussions of plagiarism usually focus on the large-scale, premeditated varieties: entire papers copied from Cliff’s Notes with no attribution whatsoever, companies that sell term papers, and so forth. Data from this study suggest, however, that far more plagiarism tends to be relatively small-scale—a sentence here, a paragraph there, although sometimes those sentences and paragraphs, when added together, constitute a considerable portion of a student’s text. In addition, most plagiarism detected in this study was almost certainly unintentional (or perhaps not consciously intentional, with the conscious mind sometimes rather selective about what it acknowledges); most (although by no means all) of the copied passages, although lacking quotation marks, were cited parenthetically.

Unfortunately, the data from this study do not suggest any particular methods for decreasing the likelihood of plagiarism. Providing students with ample time to complete the assignment is no guarantee. True, Ms. Kramer’s First-Year-Composition students (Chapter Six), whose papers revealed the highest frequency of plagiarism of any group in the study, had only nine days to produce their papers; but plagiarism was
also detected in First-Year-Composition papers written for Ms. Logan (Chapter Five), who began teaching the research paper three months before the due date, as well as in a senior thesis which the student had been given two semesters to complete (Chapter Eight). Similarly, encouraging students to choose topics which they find meaningful does not necessarily eliminate plagiarism. Ms. Gibson (Chapter Four) encouraged her Basic Writers to choose topics they cared about, yet she received a recycled essay which was probably already plagiarized when it was handed in for a previous class, and Ms. Kramer's plagiarism-prone students received more encouragement to choose topics meaningful to them than did any other group in the sample. While it might seem that plagiarism is simply the logical extension of undergraduates' tendency to define the research paper as a mere summary of their sources' ideas, this study does not demonstrate that a teacher discourages plagiarism by encouraging students to put their own thoughts into the paper. More than any other classroom teacher in the sample, Ms. Kramer attempted to persuade her students to interact with their sources, rather than simply summarizing sources, yet her students often reacted by copying from sources, without using quotation marks. Similarly, Helen (Chapter Eight) seemed to put great value on creating her version of the assignment, an assignment involving original research, yet she ended up copying, without attribution, from a friend and former colleague. Nor does a
good teacher-student relationship necessarily discourage plagiarism. Ms. Kramer's students led the study in enthusiasm for their classroom teacher as well as in rate of plagiarism. Finally, a "Big Brother Is Watching" approach seems to have no deterrent effect. In the three classes in which teachers collected photocopies of sources or the sources themselves with the warning that they would check for plagiarism, the rate of plagiarism was slightly higher than in other classes represented in the study.

Other writers have portrayed plagiarists as somewhat distasteful types who are interested solely in the grade rather than in receiving an education (Connell 24-28), who regard the teacher as indifferent to their writing (Connell 24-25), or who view the research-paper assignment either as meaningless (Macrorie 247) or as an impossible demand (Carroll 93). The data from this study, however, reveal a different picture, a picture suggesting that a teacher cannot expect to identify potential plagiarists by watching for certain personality traits. The students in this study who plagiarized the most extensively were cooperative and friendly during interviews, generally seemed pleased with the class and the teacher, often expressed pride in the work they had done on the research paper, and seemed highly competent, with higher GPA's, on the average, than the remaining students in the sample.
A further, rather chilling point is demonstrated by the data from this study: examined purely from a pragmatic, grade-point-dominated perspective, plagiarism works. Granted, on three occasions teachers in the sample wrote beside a sentence or two of student work that the students may have been relying too much on their sources’ words; but in each case, the teacher was relying on instinct, not on checking the student’s wording against the source’s wording. Moreover, one of the teachers had marked a passage which did not in fact contain any plagiarism, while the other two had marked only a small percentage of the plagiarism contained in the papers. Even though three teachers in the sample collected copies of the students’ sources along with the finished papers, with the promise that they would check sources, and even though one teacher was reading material plagiarized from a senior thesis for which he had served as major advisor a year previously, in not a single instance did a teacher catch a student plagiarizing. Not one of the students who plagiarized had his or her grade lowered as a result. On the average, the students whose papers contained a page or more of largely verbatim copying without quotation marks received higher grades on their papers than did the students whose papers did not contain plagiarism.

In addition plagiarism, source checks revealed that almost every paper in the sample contained at least some citations which did not, in fact, specify the page or pages of
source material the student had used in preceding sentences of his or her paper; that in almost half the papers, most or all citations were non-functional, failing to provide enough information for a reader to look up the source and confirm the student's information; and that in many of the papers, the students had distorted the information from the source. As with plagiarism, the non-functional citations and the distortions of information from printed sources invariably went undetected by the teachers.

From a purely pragmatic standpoint, one remedy to the problems of plagiarism and inaccuracy is for teachers not only to require their students to hand in photocopies of cited pages along with their research papers (as three teachers in the sample did), but also to examine those photocopied pages, comparing the cited pages with the relevant passages in the students' papers (as no teacher in the sample seems to have done). However, the photocopying would be expensive and inconvenient for students, and the checking would be enormously time-consuming (and, judging from this study, terribly disheartening) for the teachers. Even more time-consuming for both students and teachers would be a corollary effect: if unintentional plagiarism, non-functional citations, and distortion of information from sources are as widespread as this study suggests, then many students would probably have to rewrite and resubmit their papers, and many teachers would have to read yet another version of the papers
and to check against photocopied sources yet again. Faced with such an exorbitant expenditure of their time, many teachers may prefer to retain their current methods of evaluating research papers. However, such teachers would do well to consider that even though the knowledge that they were part of this study presumably made the teachers in this sample somewhat more careful than they would ordinarily be in evaluating papers, many of the teachers in this sample would surely have been appalled had they known how often their highest grades had gone to papers full of unacknowledged borrowings, non-functional citations, and factual errors. Judging from the data in this study, teachers must choose among expending enormous amounts of time checking student work against sources, grading papers while remaining ignorant regarding the accuracy of information in the papers being graded, and abandoning the research-paper assignment altogether.

On a more theoretical level, teachers must recognize that many students simply possess markedly different views of textual ownership than do most teachers. Despite being subjected semester after semester to a barrage of handouts and composition-textbook assignments explaining plagiarism in unambiguous terms and with clear examples, enormous numbers of bright, capable students persist in believing that nothing except quotations need be cited or in believing that parenthetical citations, without quotation marks, are
sufficient attribution for verbatim copying. In many cases the students’ mistakes undoubtedly stem from difficulty in mastering a new form, and perhaps some of the mistakes reflect an at least subconscious intention to cheat; yet surely the persistence of the difficulty indicates that many students simply do not share with teachers an urgent need to establish the source of the words and ideas in any particular part of their text. Similarly, after being warned that a particular sentence in his rough draft did not sound as though it was in his own words, Martin (Chapter Seven) stated during an interview that he had compared his wording with his source’s wording and did not consider his wording to be plagiarized—yet a check revealed that his sentence was, in fact, worded very much like a sentence from his source, without quotation marks. A junior with a 3.6 GPA and with several research papers (all of which had received A’s or B’s) to his credit already, Martin had repeatedly been taught about plagiarism and was certainly intelligent enough to have absorbed the lessons. He simply did not define the term as stringently as most teachers would. In Bakhtinian terms, it appears that many students are not particularly interested in distinguishing among the various voices contributing to a text.

Moreover, if students learn from teachers’ actions as well as from teachers’ words, then teachers may well contribute to some students’ rather casual attitude toward
crediting sources. While Dr. Carter (Chapter Eight) would probably have been upset had he realized that Helen had copied roughly three pages of her senior thesis more or less verbatim from a previous student’s senior thesis, during interviews Dr. Carter offered no apologies for having written, under Helen’s name, a proposal for her to present a paper at a convention of student researchers. Similarly, Ms. Gibson (Chapter Four), Ms. Kramer (Chapter Six), and Ms. Harris (Chapter Seven) all gave out a handout on the same subject to their classes. While no two of the three handouts were identical in their entirety, all three handouts shared long passages of verbatim copying from a common source, passages longer than any plagiarized passage from any student paper in the sample. Ms. Kramer and Ms. Harris both orally cited a source, telling their students that the handout reflected the policy of the University’s English Department. But Ms. Gibson, who did not work for the University and who presumably encountered a form of the handout when taking English classes at the University, gave no indication that the handout’s wordings came from anyone but herself. The topic of the teachers’ almost-identical handouts, ironically, was plagiarism. Indeed, it seems likely that every teacher reading this study has at one time or another "borrowed" a handout from a colleague or from a textbook, without mentioning the source in the handout or in class discussion. While most teachers would surely argue that the writing of course-related handouts is fundamentally
different from the writing of research papers, from a student's perspective the main difference might seem to be that teachers write handouts, while students write research papers. In summary, then, while an immediate pragmatic response to student plagiarism might be to require and to check copies of students' sources, perhaps a more significant long-range response should be to examine students' and teachers' attitudes regarding literary ownership, with the goal of establishing some common ground.

Besides applications for the classroom, the data from this study have many implications for researchers. The study now turns to those implications.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

If this study has produced useful information for composition specialists, one obvious implication is that further information could be derived from studies which employ similar methods to examine the writing processes of other students responding to different assignments. No two students and no two teachers will handle a research-paper assignment in quite the same way. Thus, even though Kuhlthau and Haskell have already conducted qualitative studies of high school students working on research papers, and even though this study focuses on college undergraduates working on research papers, further studies of high school students or of undergraduates working on research papers could greatly expand our knowledge and deepen our insight. Such studies would not,
of course, be replications, since qualitative research can never truly be replicated. Moreover, all the students in Kuhlthau’s and Haskell’s samples, as well as twenty-one of the twenty-four students in this sample, were writing papers for English classes. While Chapter Eight of this study examines some of the issues involved in research-based writing for other disciplines, researchers could go much further with these issues, perhaps by focusing on courses designed to introduce students to writing in a specific major or by tracking the same students from research-paper assignments in composition classes to research-paper assignments in their majors. In addition, qualitative studies could focus on the research-based-writing processes of graduate students or of professors writing for publication. Some researcher persistent enough or masochistic enough might even profitably examine the processes by which one or more students complete doctoral dissertations—although one would hope that such a researcher, for his or her own sake, would choose to study a dissertation which took less time and fewer pages to complete than this one has taken.

Because this study has aimed for comprehensiveness, it inevitably has sometimes sacrificed depth for breadth, briefly touching on a particular element of the research-based-writing process and then moving on to examine another element. Other researchers might profitably focus more narrowly on a single element—perhaps on just one of the several theories
influencing this study. One researcher might use Bakhtinian concepts discussed in previous chapters to focus on ways students incorporate source material into their own research papers or to focus on the influence of students' previous teachers or writing experiences, positive or negative. Another might focus on Stotsky's theories about the role of written plans in writers' attempts to find focus for their research-based writing. Another, building on the work of Schwegler and Shamoon, might focus on the variables which determine ways students define the research-paper task. Another study, influenced by Larson's views, might focus on the carry-over value, if any, of "generic" research-paper instruction when students begin to write research-based essays within their academic majors. Still another study might focus on Ford, Rees, and Ward's assertion that longer, more complex research papers require fundamentally different skills than do shorter, simpler research papers.

Implicit in each chapter reporting results of this study are directions for further research. Some of these research topics are listed below, along with the chapter of this study in which the topic is to some degree explored:

--The efficacy of assigning a series of linked assignments, gradually leading to the research paper (Chapter Four).

--The problems faced by teachers trained in other academic disciplines when they are required to teach writing classes (Chapter Four).

--The effects of requiring composition students to write research papers on literary topics (Chapter Five).
--Students' and librarians' perspectives on teachers' lists of suggested topics (Chapter Five).

--The effects of a shortened semester on students' processes of completing research papers (Chapter Six).

--The effects of requiring students to write within a specified rhetorical situation (Chapter Seven).

--Ways teachers' written comments on rough drafts affect students' revision processes (Chapter Seven).

--Students' attitudes toward peer editing (Chapter Seven).

--The mentor-protege relationship in senior theses or in similar writing projects required in graduate school (Chapter Eight).

--The role of discipline-specific writing courses in preparing students to conduct research and to write within their academic disciplines (Chapter Eight).

--The role of laboratory notebooks in science majors' initiation into writing within their disciplines (Chapter Eight).

--The nature of "discovery" during composition, including the possibility that what the writer perceives as an epiphany had in fact been building for a long time (Chapter Eight).

--The effect of requiring students to do oral presentations about their research prior to writing about that research (Chapter Eight).

--The possibility of conflict between First-Year Composition's frequent emphasis on elaboration-centered, relatively free-form writing and science's emphasis on concise, relatively fixed-form writing (Chapter Eight).

Of course, further research need not focus on the same theorists who influenced this study, nor on issues emerging from only one chapter of this study. A researcher may wish to focus on students' attitudes toward and use of note cards or outlines, subjects recurring in every chapter reporting.
results of this study. Another might focus on reasons for and effects of students’ inflexibility in approaching an assignment, as seen in this study through Joe (Chapter Five) and Walter (Chapter Seven). Still another might focus on the strategy of structuring a research paper in imitation of the structure of one of the paper’s sources, a strategy which one student each in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven attempted to employ. If researchers are ingenious enough, they might even attempt to determine how, if at all, students who are motivated primarily by the desire to learn approach assignments differently from students who are motivated primarily by grades and the desire to land a prestigious job or a generous fellowship for graduate study.

Certainly, there is also room for further study of the student-teacher relationship and its effect on the student’s work, as well as on the teacher’s evaluation of that work. Within this study, the students who worked the hardest and who most successfully completed the assignment, such as Jacki (Chapter Five) and Vijay (Chapter Eight), generally enjoyed relationships of mutual admiration with their teachers. Yet others such as Martin and Wesley (Chapter Seven) produced well-written papers and received A’s while expressing cynicism about certain elements of the teacher’s approach to the assignment, and some students produced unfocused or even plagiarized papers despite expressing enthusiasm for the teacher and the assignment (Chapters Four, Six, and Eight).
Also, certain students—Scott (Chapter Six) and Zachary (Chapter Seven) for example—behaved in such a way that their teachers faced considerable difficulty in evaluating their work fairly.

Within the study of the student-teacher relationship, further research might also focus on the effects of gender-related classroom issues on students’ writing and on teachers’ evaluation of that writing. Within this study, Scott’s reluctance to conform to Ms. Kramer’s desire for evidence of extensive revision (Chapter Six) may have been at least somewhat gender-related, as might Ms. Kramer’s relatively harsh written comments on Scott’s paper and her far more nurturing comments on the papers of less self-confident, less assertive female students such as Velma and Cora. Similarly, Helen’s struggles with her senior thesis (Chapter Eight) may have resulted in part from her position as a woman in the almost exclusively male world of science.

Finally, not all further research suggested by this study needs to be qualitative. For example, this study found evidence suggesting that in certain disciplines, research-based writing requires familiarity with the few texts regarded within the discipline as crucial to a given issue more than it requires the ability to locate a large number of sources, regardless of those sources’ quality. Questionnaires sent to teachers in the disciplines might be the best way to confirm or deny this preliminary evidence. Quantitative research
might also be the best way to examine the familial, social, and institutional factors which strongly affect any given student’s chances for success in college in general and on a research-paper assignment in particular. Moreover, this study’s rather disturbing findings regarding plagiarism suggest the need for large-scale, quantitative research to determine just how extensive a problem plagiarism is. A team of researchers might attempt to acquire a large, relatively unbiased sample of research papers written by high school students, First-Year-Composition students, juniors and seniors writing within their majors, and graduate students. The research team could then simply track down the pages listed in textual citations, attempting to determine how frequently students at each level plagiarized and how frequently students’ citations genuinely identified the sources of the students’ information. Such a study could not only suggest rates of plagiarism and of accuracy in citation among papers by students at various educational levels, but also could suggest what correlation, if any, exists between the grades research papers receive and the extent to which those papers avoid plagiarism and cite sources accurately. Finally, through a questionnaire researchers might attempt to correlate students’ accuracy in citations and in avoiding plagiarism with teachers’ approaches to the assignment, to determine whether or not any specific pedagogical methods encourage accuracy in citation and discourage plagiarism.
Before beginning work on this study, I had never read a doctoral dissertation. I assume, therefore, that if anyone besides my committee ever reads this dissertation, it will probably be graduate students about to begin their own dissertations, along with perhaps a few curious members of the sample I worked with. Thus, although I have tried throughout this study to keep the focus on my sample and not on myself, I wish to end with a personal anecdote and with messages to these two groups of readers.

It was late August of 1989. I was only about halfway through my field research and far short of beginning to write. I had just conducted my final interview with David, the first student to volunteer to be in my sample as well as the most cooperative student in the sample. For months I had observed David at close range as he struggled through a research project that had left him sometimes exhilarated, sometimes almost traumatized, and finally, despite certain limitations, triumphant. Now, his senior thesis and his contribution to my study complete, he had graduated. In a few days he would be flying to Japan to enroll at a school there, while I would go back to juggling a full-time teaching load with work on my dissertation.

When we reached the point where our paths would diverge, David turned, grinning, and shook my hand. Then, holding up a copy of his completed research project, he said, "I’m done. Now it’s your turn."
It took more months and more pages than I ever would have imagined, but, David, I finally made it. And to any graduate students preparing to begin their own studies, I can only add one more "suggestion for further research," repeating what David said to me: I'm done. Now it's your turn.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980.


Spivey, Nancy, and James R. King. "Readdes as Writers: Composing From Sources." Berkeley: Center for the Study of Writing, 1989.


APPENDIX A

The community college English Department’s standardized scale for deducting points for errors

GRADING CRITERIA FOR FRESHMAN WRITING CLASSES*

MAJOR ERRORS (-10 points)
- Number agreement of subject and verb (6a)
- Number agreement of pronoun and antecedent (6b)
- Run-on sentence (3)
- Commas splice including punctuation of compound sentence with conjunctive adverb (3, 14)
- Fragment (2)

MINOR ERRORS (-5 points)
- Vague or remote pronoun reference (29)
- Ambiguous modifier (25)
- Dangling modifier (25)
- Incorrect parallelism (26)
- Failure to use comma properly (12, 13)
- Failure to use apostrophe to indicate possession (13)
- Incorrect use of semicolon (14)
- Indiscriminate or incorrect capitalization (9)
- Failure to use quotation marks correctly — direct quotation, “special sense,” or minor titles (14)
- Missing terminal punctuation (17)
- Stray punctuation marks (13)

FORMAT (-5 each occurrence) Refer to Section 8 in HARSACE
- Improper spacing between title and text or between successive headings in outline; all other spacing
- Wrong margin
- Page numbers missing or incorrectly placed
- Wrong indentation
- Sloppy or illegible text

SPELLING (each word -2) except -5 for each word listed below:
- suppose, supposed, separate, all right
- its, it's, your, you're, receive
- a lot, their, there, they're

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION (-50 overall) Refer to Sections 22, 33
- Lack of coherent thesis statement introduced in synthetic introductory paragraph and repeated in analytic concluding paragraph
- Lack of definitive three-part essay structure; beginning, middle, and end
- Illogical and inadequate development of paragraphs
- Lack of appropriate or effective transitions

*Numbers in parentheses indicate applicable sections in the HARSACE COLLEGE HANDBOOK, tenth edition.
APPENDIX B

Jacki's rough outline

Air Pollution & The Ozone: A Dangerous Combination

Thesis:

Intro: Science Fiction Theme

Define:
- Air Pollution
- Ozone

Causes: Obvious
- Political

Effects: on Ozone:
- Health
- Economically
- Environment
- Worldwide Concern

What Can Be Done

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APPENDIX C

Jacki's notes on the back of her outline page

Intro

Desert Scenario

These: This is not science fiction. This is what will happen if air pollution is allowed to continue at present levels.

Air pollution is a huge problem (quote cited toxic levels). But air pollution is also a complex reaction that culminates in greenhouse effect. In order to understand the greenhouse effect, we must look at the overall implications of ozone depletion and all its implications.

Define Ozone - O3 in 2nd layer of atmsphere (stratosphere)

Ozone absorbs UV radiation only allowing a small band to reach earth. That band reaches earth is converted to heat and radiates back outward where O3 acts as a shield and hold temperature as blanket to keep earth warm + constant temp.

Define Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) give bromine.

Problems: Occur when CFC's in form of... are released into the air to react with O3. Wherefore, chemical reaction: the they break down O3 \( \Rightarrow \) O2 and for every 1 chlorine atom, 100,000 O3 molecules thereby depleting the ozone. But what further entails CFC's is the fact that not only destroying O3 and thereby letting...
APPENDIX D

Jacki's revised outline

2nd Outline

Intro: Dessert Scenario

Thesis:

2st TP So much above proportions must look at all implications.

3rd TP Define CFCs: 3 kinds of CFCs - create stratosphere - 2nd layer of atmosphere - looks like blanket - lets some UV in retains heat - normal temp earth at 59°F.

4th TP Define CFCs: made to be used in - refrigeration - pesticide spraying - deodorants - 1st layer of atmosphere - gets destroyed on way outside.

5th TP How CFCs affect ozone: mimics H-Cl - France level to upper stratosphere - Cl from CFCs "scavenges" O3 + breaks to O - no more O3 in atmosphere.

6th TP CFCs are converting CFCs from lower level to upper level - needs more affect - Cl from CFCs "scavenges" O3 + breaks to O - no more O3 in atmosphere.

7th TP CFCs are contributing for 3% of the greenhouse effect.

8th TP 2nd Problem: rise in UV reaching earth from depletion of ozone.

9th TP 2nd Problem: earth heating up green house effect.

10th TP Contributing to effect.

11th TP Why nothing being done:

Possible Solutions:

Call for action:

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APPENDIX E

Jacki's longhand draft of the opening paragraphs

Intro:

Imagine for just a moment a world of dinosaurs. Just as you are trudging through forest and thick, tangling their way through the surface of the earth. Imagination, now a theory taking form. Imagination weaving threads of possibility, this milky humidity of climate and land. So many may have been paradise, but other parts of the world would be to desert. Higher temperatures and shifting weather patterns from drought and torrential conditions (Gribbin 106). Also we understand an unrealistic dimension. According to the scientific community that causes humanity by the 21st century. This is what will happen if alteration of the environment continues at current levels (Gribbin 94). Also, as we expand, "greenhouse" gases are released, causing us to understand the complexity of chemistry. These are many contributors to this project. Everything from volcanic eruptions (96) to car exhaust release emissions can be held responsible. One of the major contributors is chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). CFCs are responsible for just 2% and have been around for 39% of the greenhouse effect (Gribbin 94). In fact, CFCs in general are much more effective at generating the greenhouse effect than even the dreaded carbon dioxide molecule (Leeon 42).

In order to understand how these reactions...
APPENDIX F

Jacki's typed draft of the opening paragraphs

Imagine for just a moment the world of the dinosaurs. Lush tropical forests, dense and thick, tangling their way across the surface of the earth. Temperatures warm and balmy, bringing stifling humidity to blanket the land. To some this may seem like paradise. But at the same time other parts of the world would be turning to desert. Higher temperatures and shifting weather patterns would foretell of drought and widespread crop failure (Gribbin 100). Unfortunately, this isn't far from reality. According to the scientific community a worldwide climatic change could occur by the twenty-first century. If the ozone continues to be destroyed at current levels, this is what will occur (Gribbin 97). Indeed, this "has the potential to alter life as we know it," (Grove 512).

To understand how our environment is being altered we must first understand the complexity of chemistry. There are many chemicals that contribute to this problem. Everything from volcanic eruptions (Economist 86) to vehicle emissions can be held responsible. Undoubtedly, one of the major contributors is chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Alone F-11 and F-12, just two of the many CFC family chemicals, accounts for twenty-nine percent of the greenhouse effect (Gribbin 94). In fact, CFCs in general are much more efficient (20,000 times more efficient!) at generating the greenhouse effect than the dreaded carbon dioxide we hear so much about (Lemonick 42). But in order to understand how these reactions occur we must first discern what the ozone is and how it works.
APPENDIX G

Jacki's opening paragraph, as of February 10

Imagine for just a moment an environment of prehistoric earth. Lush tropical forests, dense and thick, tangle their way across the surface. Temperatures warm and balmy, bring stifling humidity to blanket the land. To some this may seem like paradise. But at the same time other parts of the world would be abandoned to desert. Higher temperatures and shifting weather patterns would result in drought and widespread crop failure (Gribbin 97). Unfortunately, this is not far from reality. According to the scientific community, a worldwide climatic warming could occur by the twenty-first century. If the atmosphere continues to be destroyed or current levels, this will be man's fate (Gribbin 97). Indeed, this "has the potential to alter life on this planet" (Grove 512).

To understand how our environment is being altered, we must first understand the complexity of chemistry. There are many chemicals that contribute to this problem. Everything from volcanic eruptions (Economist 86) to vehicle emissions can be held responsible. Undoubtedly, one of the major contributors is chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Alone F-11 and F-12, just two of the many CFC family chemicals, accounts for twenty-nine percent of the greenhouse effect (Gribbin 94). In fact, CFCs in general are much more efficient (20,000 times more efficient) at generating the greenhouse effect than the dreaded carbon dioxide we hear so much about (Lemonick 42). But in order to understand how these reactions occur we must first discern what the ozone is and how it works.

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APPENDIX H

A page from Jacki's February 10 draft

But even as great as humans
acknowledged the outcome of CFC
contamination, people of the world are
just now ready to address this problem.

The world must cooperate on
the first step of curbing the flow of
CFC pollutants into the atmosphere.

And this leads to the problem: the US.

Although the US banned the use of
CFCs in aerosol cans in 1978, they still continue
to produce 1/3 of the world's total output of these
chemicals (US News 19). Because the other 2/3
are produced in the rest of the world, the
only solution is a world wide policy. This
was attempted by an international treaty set
to freeze CFC production at 1986 levels and
reduce production 50% by the turn of the
century (CNN). This treaty is set to go into
force this year. However, it is not likely to last
for future environmentalists.

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APPENDIX I

A page from Martin's rough draft, with Ms. Harris's comments

Imagine yourself on a crowded street in a foreign city. The street is filled with worshipers and dancers, chanting and singing. A circle of people begins to form, leaving one man in the center. This man announces in his native language that he is about to take a journey into the spirit world. In order for the spirits to allow this, he says, he must endure great pain. The man drinks from a clear glass and goes into a deep trance. In a moment he breaks the glass with his hand and swallows all of the pieces whole. The scenes following this are too graphic in nature to describe (Taylor).

The scene above is an actual ritual that a religious man in Haiti performed. When he returned from his trip into the spirit world, he announced what the spirits had said to him. This sort of religious behavior may be described as shamanism. A shaman is a person who is chosen by the divine to receive "ecstatic powers" to deal with the spirit world, and is present usually in only primal and tribal religions (Ellwood 40). Shamanism in some form or another appears in most parts of the world. It is present in native American religions, African religions, and Eskimo religions and countless others. Though it has affected and still affects the world as we know it, shamanism, which has been practiced
APPENDIX J

A page from one of David's drafts

"Business writers," Jasper Rogers once mistakenly proclaimed that "serious labor trouble in **** is a thing unknown" (Times, Clipping File, 1937; 1938). Undoubtedly, he and many others preferred to ignore the harsh reality of class conflict spawned by the development of large-scale private industry in America.

If Rogers had read his history carefully, he would have realized how wrong he was.

Local industrial textile workers began to react during World War I to the injustices that had been perpetuated in the local textile industry since the 1890's when the factory system started to dominate textile production. By May, 1917, textile workers became aware of the social gap that had been created by the new manufacturing system under the system of mass production and determined to lessen it by unionizing under the leadership of the American Federation of Labor (the United Textile Workers of America).

The textile operatives' efforts to unionize, however, were largely hampered by the all too common policy of all workers associated with the union, yet by the lack of a working class consciousness among the operators.

**** textile operatives. Even before the local UTVIA struck on May 31, 1917, the workers had battled among themselves over whether to unionize. The intra-class violence continued until the strike was settled on July 28, 1917.

Despite the internal class divisions, the local UTIA was strengthened in 1917 by the knowledge that the federal government would intervene to ensure the steady supply of textiles necessary for the maintenance of the armed forces during the war.

**** = name of city

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APPENDIX K

A page from David's rough draft with Dr. Montgomery's comments

of the United Hosiery Mills. Many of the mill owners also attended the
universities such as

* collegiate level at Princeton (Frank Miller), Rensselaer Polytechnic
  Institute (Raat), and the Virginia Military Institute (Andrews). Although

some of the mill owners had little or no formal education, such as Barr or
Kain (Moore, 745), most of the laborers had no education whatsoever
except for the training they received at the training school run by the

mill owners collectively (McMurry, 246).

By 1917, the social realism was raised to criticism because of
the inequities which had developed. When S.F. McIntyre arrived in

*** from New York in the early part of May and began to

meet many of the workers who had been unable to articulate

many followers, because his ideas were accepted by the workers to

be an adequate description of their situation. As an organizer for the

conservative U.T.W.A., McIntyre stressed the need of the workers to join

a union so that the union could represent their interests in a

collective bargaining manner, and his efforts quickly led to a strong

organizational movement among the laborers of the Buster Brown Mill. By

May 17, 1917, many Buster Brown operatives had "signed union cards" making

them official members of the U.T.W.A., but they made no further

demands. However, on May 18, the owners of the mill began to discharge

"all persons known to be connected with the effort to organize" (Times,
May 17, 5). This lockout led to a sympathy walkout by many non-union

laborers who decided to join the union after this incident. Labor

solidarity was so tight at Buster Brown that "all but twelve had signed

**** = name of city

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