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From High School Writing to College Writing: A Case Study of
University Freshmen in Transition

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Lisa Marie Waner

December 2013

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Melanie Sperling, Chairperson

Dr. John Wills

Dr. John Briggs

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The Dissertation of Lisa Marie Waner is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From High School Writing to College Writing: A Case Study of
University Freshmen in Transition

by

Lisa Marie Waner

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate School of Education
University of California, Riverside, December 2013
Professor Melanie Sperling, Chairperson

Students moving from high school writing to college writing are, from a sociocultural perspective, transitioning from one “community of practice” to another, from one “Discourse” to another (Gee, 1992; Wenger, 1998). This process can be difficult, not only for basic writers (Bartholomae, 1985; Shaughnessy, 1977) but also for those students who test into regular freshman English classes and therefore are considered ready for college level writing. Drawing on sociocultural theory, I studied students’ experiences as they entered this community of freshman writing at a four-year university focusing on a class for students who had satisfied the prerequisites for Freshman Composition 1.

I studied the class using case-study methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I observed and recorded every class session (approximately 30) for an academic quarter, held multiple interviews with the instructor and four focal students, and collected the focal students’ assigned writing and other classroom documents. I analyzed the data thematically and structurally, drawing from

Bartholomae (1985), Blau (2010), Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum (2010) and Sperling & Freedman (1987), and looked for developing themes based on Wenger's (1998) theoretical lens of Communities of Practice.. Themes included the development of shared repertoires, willingness to engage in the routines/practices of the classroom community, students' response to student/instructor expectations and challenges, and gaining or denial of legitimacy as a potential member of the classroom writing community.

My study found that while participation in key community practices was part of the process of joining a new community, the mutual granting of legitimacy by the instructor and student was instrumental in moving students toward membership in this new community. In addition, my study examined the multiple avenues of access offered through instructor feedback to the students and the possible impact student response and interpretation of these comments had on writing performance.

My dissertation contributes to understanding how students from varied pre-college contexts negotiate the 21st century college writing community, adding to our knowledge of the ways that varied students' experiences, academic promise, and writing performance come together and unfold in this key course for incoming college freshmen.

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Chapter 1

The Issue and Why It Is a Problem

When students move from high school writing to college writing, they are, from a sociocultural perspective, transitioning from one “community of practice” to another, from one “Discourse” to another. A community of practice, simply put, is a group of people that works together to create meaning from their experience and about their experience as they share common interests, desires, and practices (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). A similar view of communities defines these groups as belonging to or reflecting a “Discourse” (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 110), a way of being a certain type of person with a focus on an individual’s way of talking, acting, believing and interpreting within a group. When students move from high school writing into college writing, they are faced with the challenge of joining a new community or Discourse. They are often asked to “speak” the language of the university, to “try on particular ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing” (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 273), both in speaking and writing, that are valued at the university and presumed to carry students through their written university course work. In addition, there are certain expectations of behavior and ways of being a student within the university classroom. This process can be fraught with difficulties, and for many students, this transition is a problem (Blau, 2010; Durst, 1999; McCarthy, 1987; Smagorinsky et al., 2010; Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992; Sommers & Saltz, 2004).

Some researchers see students as not ready for college level writing (Bartholomae, 1985; Blau, 2010; Flower, 1979; Lunsford, 1980), while others see the difficulties as related to a mismatch of expectations between high school and college which contributes to difficulty writing in this new setting (Durst, 1999; Heath, 1983; Sommers & Saltz, 2004). For example, while freshman composition is a common rite of passage for incoming college students, many students are unable to pass college entry-level writing exams to make it into regular composition courses (Bartholomae, 1985; National Commission on Writing 2011), while, theoretically, others who make it may encounter unforeseen challenges. While there is a growing research literature about students in the former group, often referred to as basic writers (Bartholomae, 1980; Bizzell, 1986; Lunsford, 1980; Monahan, 1984; Scott, 1997; Shaughnessy, 1977), we know less about the writing experiences of the latter. My study centers on these students, that is, students who passed the college writing entry exam and entered directly into regular freshman composition. While it is often expected that students who do not pass the entry exam struggle in writing in their remedial writing classes, I found that the students I studied also struggled, even to the point of not passing the class. Since Freshman Composition is seen as an introduction to the writing students will produce throughout their university experience and beyond, it is important to understand why even competent students struggle and the factors that influence their struggles.

My study asked about students' experiences as they entered this community of practice, this new Discourse. What were the rituals, routines, and behaviors that students participated in as they tried to "fit" into freshman composition classes? What could we learn from their writing, beyond grades and teacher markings, regarding their "fit" into this new community? In short, what constituted the challenges and successes for the student and how could each be explained?

By the conclusion of my study, I found the sociocultural processes fostering the joining of a new community to be complex and mediated by several factors. For my theoretical framework, I drew upon Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) notions of Communities of Practice and the processes involved in joining a community of practice. I found one mediating factor to be the type and level of student participation in the practices of the community and while this was an important element in their being part of the community, a second mediating factor involved the mutual granting of legitimacy between instructor and student, and was key in moving students toward membership. In addition, my study looked at a third mediating factor, the variations of legitimacy offered the students through the instructor's oral and written feedback on their writing and the impact his feedback had on student performance as they interpreted and responded to it. Based on their response and willingness to participate in classroom practices, and more importantly their view of the instructor as a legitimate resource for their writing

knowledge and skill, the focal students in the study experienced varying kinds of success toward becoming members of the college writing community.

Research Related to My Study

A number of studies have focused on college writers, helping us to understand the difficulties in writing at the college level before they are ready cognitively and developmentally. Many have focused on the process of learning, interpreting, and responding to the expectations of the college composition classroom. Others, more recently, have focused on the influences of the social setting and immediate context on students' ability to join the college writing community. These studies have addressed the nature and difficulties of college writing, and have come from varied theoretical perspectives.

Focus on Student Written Texts and Composing

Cognitive theories have often focused on the texts students produce in order to understand students' composing processes. Flower (1979) conducted a seminal case study of student writing in which she looked at two drafts of progress reports written by students in a college freshman organizational psychology class. The students took on the role of consulting analyst for a local organization and had to discover causes of a particular problem and share their conclusions with the client. Analyzing the written drafts for characteristics of "structure, function, and style... which in turn reflects an underlying cognitive process" (p. 20), Flower identified as a key problem for students

who are new to academic writing at the college level, their tendency to produce “writer-based prose” (p. 19) rather than “reader-based prose” (p. 20). According to Flower, in writer-based prose, students organize their thoughts in an egocentric manner as if they assume the reader, like the student writer, is clear about what they have written and is making the necessary connections to create the intended meanings. The prose often follows a narrative structure where the facts are presented in the order they were discovered, not in relation to larger connections or implications. Because the writer is unaware of what the audience needs to know to make sense of the prose, the writing resembles an untouched and under-processed version of the writer’s own thoughts. The writing that Flower studied mimicked an interior monologue, with missing explicit referents, partially developed ideas, privately “loaded terms and shifting but unexpressed contexts” (p. 20). Other studies by Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981) illuminated distinct differences between the cognitive processes of expert and novice writers. Expert writers, in defining the writing situation, focused on the audience and the effect of the writing on the reader, as well as the purpose for the writing. In contrast, novice writers’ primary concerns involved addressing the topic and the features and conventions of a written text, as opposed to the needs of the reader.

Bartholomae (1985) also looked closely at the writing of college freshmen. He analyzed five hundred essays, written in response to a university placement exam prompt, to determine the “stylistic resources that enabled writers to locate themselves within an

‘academic discourse’” (p. 279). What he found was the inability of students to “appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse” (p. 276) and their failure to speak with authority by using what he called the voice and codes of those in power. According to Bartholomae, there is a context beyond the reader that requires more than just content knowledge. This context necessitates a way of talking within a particular discourse community. Until students are able to determine the conventions of the community, such as acceptable “set phrases, common sayings, gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions and necessary connections” (p. 278) and learn to push against commonplace, conventionally accepted concepts, they will not have a voice of authority within the community. In the essays Bartholomae examined, he found that students showed different levels of awareness of these codes within the academic community. Some were able to locate themselves within the discourse, writing in such a way as to establish their own authority by speaking through a voice different than just their own usual one, while many others were unable to write in a register or voice beyond their own. Like Flower (1979), Bartholomae attributed freshmen’s struggle to appropriate the expected discourse as a disconnect with readers’ expectations, yet he also discussed their inability to locate themselves as writers in the appropriate discourse. In contrast to Flower, he did not consider this struggle to come from an interior monologue in which there is no consideration of the audience. Rather, he says the writing he studied was a demonstration of “a writer who has lost himself in the discourse of his readers” (p.276; on this point, see, also, Shaughnessey, 1977). As students attempted to

speak to a perceived audience, they were unable to control the language they were expected to use. For Bartholomae, this lack of control becomes a problem of “power and finesse” (p. 277), as the student attempts to “assume privilege without having any” (p. 278) and fails accordingly. The right to speak as a member of the academy is in a sense granted by those in privileged positions, that is, university instructors, and that right may be withheld unless students demonstrate facility in the accepted discourse. This perspective on writing suggests issues of context, and the influence of context on cognition and writing.

Smagorinsky et al. (2010), in a recent study of the cognitive processes of student writing, followed one student’s composing process through the use of think-aloud protocols, an audio recording of the student’s verbalized thoughts as she composed her essay. The comments that student made while composing showed evidence of her attempt to reach beyond current abilities to write a piece that would impress the teacher “based on its semblance to disciplinary standards of scholarship” (p. 373). The high school senior, Susan, was given the assignment to write an analytical essay interpreting Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*. Susan had limited understanding of the play. Analyzing her think-aloud protocols, produced while she completed the task, Smagorinsky et al. concluded that in order to “look” like she belonged to the discourse community of the her high school teacher, she “bullshitted” (p. 368) her way through her paper with seemingly scholarly vocabulary and references. Doing so, she “sounded” like a functioning member

of the high school discourse community. However, there was no understanding behind what she wrote. As do Gee (2001) and others, Smagorinsky et al. argue that one of the requirements of a successful entry and socialization into a new community is the learning of the norms, discourses, and behaviors *according to* the community, whereas what often happens is that students are asked to perform in a capacity for which they are not ready and therefore are “forced” to put on a false persona in order to fit in. Theoretically, these attempts to appear to belong to a community when, in reality, one doesn’t yet, are a source of problems for many college freshman writers.

Social Settings and Contextual Approaches to Writing and Writers

While the studies thus far discussed all contribute to how we understand the cognitive processes of students as they attempt to enter the university writing community, they allude to but do not specifically address social setting as part of writing process. If, as sociocultural theory suggests, writing is a social endeavor, the whole social context of writing, including interactions between student and student, as well as between student and teacher, needs to be accounted for as an important component in the process of students becoming members of a writing community such as the Freshman Composition classroom.

McCarthy (1987), in agreement with Bartholomae and Smagorinsky, claimed that “language processes must be understood in terms of the contexts in which they occur” (p. 234), yet she also assumed that writing was social, and wanted to know how students

negotiated their way through interactions with their teachers across a variety of courses and contexts to produce appropriate texts. She spent 21 months focused on the writing experiences of one case study student, Dave, first as a freshman in a composition class, and then as a sophomore in Introduction to Poetry and in Cell Biology. She combined data collection methods of “observation, interviews, composing aloud protocols, and text analysis” (p. 236) as she studied the writing assignments, how the writing functioned in each classroom, and what it meant to the students. As she followed Dave from class to class, she observed him renegotiating the writing expectations and norms in each class, and even though there were similarities among classes, Dave viewed each class as a completely different context and community with its own set of expectations, rules, and standards. When Dave was able to successfully determine, through interactions with the teacher, what constituted appropriate texts, he was then able to produce them. McCarthy concluded that writing is context dependent, and for one to be successful, one must be able to interact in such a way as to identify the “content, structures, language, ways of thinking, and types of evidence required in that discipline and by that teacher” (p. 233).

Similar to McCarthy’s study in that the focus was the interaction that took place for case study subjects entering a new community of writers, Beaufort’s work (1999) studied three college graduates as they transitioned from college writing into writing for their workplace. Beaufort wanted to know what constituted their processes as these “newcomers” (p. 97) tried to negotiate their way into their new writing community. She

found much of the assimilation process was undertaken unintentionally. The newcomers were not given specific manuals on how to “be” or how to produce appropriate writing in this new community, but rather they had to ask questions, copy behaviors of “old timers” (p.97), and continually interact with their peers to negotiate their own position within this new community. As did the participants of both Bartholomae’s (1985) and Smagorinsky et al.’s (2010) studies, the women in Beaufort’s study found that within the new community, each writing situation demanded different behaviors, and to learn them, they had to actively participate in the practices. When they moved to a different position or were asked to create written documents in an unfamiliar genre, they had to go through the process of renegotiating their positions by watching those around them who were already the “experts” (p.97) in that particular context. They made friends with and socialized with the “masters” (p. 97) in order to learn how to behave and write appropriately. Beaufort found that each situation was so contextually bound that the women were adapting and renegotiating their community membership every time they moved to a different department within the company, an action akin to Dave’s negotiation processes in McCarthy’s (1987) study, as he went from class to class.

Also addressing the issue of context but focusing on classrooms, Durst (1999) attributes the difficulty of the transition from high school writing to college writing to the differing expectations among university instructors, high school teachers, and students. As an instructor at the University of Cincinnati, Durst conducted a study at that

university of college freshmen over the course of a year in an effort to discover the source of some of the difficulties these students were having with producing appropriate college-level writing. Durst spent the year conducting classroom observations, student interviews, and analysis of student work and teacher materials. He looked closely at student interactions with each other and the teacher, and investigated student writing and learning within the classroom and university setting. He found significant differences in the purposes both the instructors and the students brought to class. Students, coming from high school, were pragmatic in their approach to writing. They wanted ways to become “better writers,” which for them meant focusing on mechanics, format, content, and fluency. Writing class was expected to be one of specifics, feedback, and a chance to develop clarity. However, the freshman composition instructor had other ideas. He wanted students to use writing as a journey of self-discovery, to question the status quo, and to become critical thinkers. This mismatch of purposes and expectations, according to Durst, explains why so many students new to the university struggle in freshmen writing classes.

Sperling and Freedman (1987) conducted a study at the high school level that also illustrated the potential for a mismatch of expectations between students and the teacher. The study focused on the teacher’s written comments on students’ papers and the meaning these comments had for students. For seven weeks, Sperling and Freedman followed the processes of a high achieving ninth grade student, Lisa, as she responded to

the written comments of the teacher on her papers. Even though the comments were accompanied by teacher-student conferences, peer response groups, and whole class discussions, Lisa still had difficulty interpreting and responding appropriately to some of the remarks. Guided by Vygotsky (1978), Sperling and Freedman looked at the “information, skills, and values” (p. 346) both the teacher and student brought to the learning context and concluded that understanding the meanings behind the teacher’s comments required a shared value system “negotiated socially” (p. 345) over years within the school context. For Lisa, a mismatch of such values led to difficulties in her writing as she attempted revise her essay, often incorrectly, according to her own understanding and interpretation of the teacher’s written comments.

A study conducted by Sommers and Saltz (2004) at Harvard University followed 422 freshmen through their four years of college. At the outset of the freshman year, students were challenged by the president of the university “to write a great deal...and experiment with different kinds of writing – because experimentation forces one to develop new forms of perception and thought...” (p. 125). The challenge embodied in entering the college writing community was recognized as one of standing on the threshold as students were asked to leave the familiar behind and locate themselves in realms of “uncertainty and ambiguity” (p. 125). The focus of this study was the experience of students as they learned to write in this new context. Did the students experience writing as a way of learning and thinking or merely as another school

assignment or form of evaluation by the professors? Using surveys, student writing, and interviews, Sommers and Saltz researched student writing experiences and the central role writing played as students made the transition to college. It didn't take students long to realize that expectations were different in the context of a university and the methods and thinking they had used in high school were not adequate for the college setting.

Sommers and Saltz found when students were able to see themselves as novices, they were more capable of learning new skills, and when they were able to see writing as more than just an assignment and instead a way of writing about topics that mattered to them, they were able to sustain an interest and focus in academic writing throughout their undergraduate careers. The students who were successful in entering the writing community found that writing gave them a sense of belonging and they gradually learned to see themselves as "legitimate members of a college community" (p. 131). These students were able to see writing more as a give and take between themselves and an audience where there was a larger purpose for writing beyond the satisfaction of a classroom assignment or evaluative requirement. Not all students were able to take this perspective and consequently struggled. The difficulties increased when freshmen refused to embrace the "uncertainty and humility of being a novice" (p. 134), and instead accepted the belief that there was a "secret code" (p. 134) to academic writing that the instructors kept hidden. These freshmen continued to rely on high school methods and viewed each writing task as a "mere assignment" (p. 140) or just another grade. Until the

freshmen recognized that writing in the context of college had a greater purpose beyond completing an assignment, writing was a struggle. Sommers and Saltz (2004) concluded that to be successful, freshman writers needed to make a “paradigm shift” (p. 139) in their thinking about the purposes of written assignments beyond the classroom as much as they needed to realize their place in the community and context of the university. They found “students who initially accept their status as novices and allow their passions to guide them make the greatest gains in writing development” (p. 145). Similar to Durst’s, these findings illuminated the mismatch of expectations between students and instructors as a potential challenge as students moved into college writing.

Sociocultural Approaches to the Problems of Transition

As these above studies suggest, switching from one writing community to another requires active participation with current community members. Yet while interaction is important, another influential factor in this transition is the social and cultural background of the participants. Students bring their own histories of expectations, norms, and behaviors into the classroom, which contribute to how “they negotiate the expectations and demands of school learning” (Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006, p. 312). This process of negotiation necessitates active participation as people function within a sociocultural context and one’s interpretation of each new situation is evaluated from a particular position or perspective based on the collection of past experiences (Langer & Applebee, 1986; Rogoff, 2003). In other words, what students bring to school in terms of

their cultural resources, experiences, and ways of being, influences the transition from one community to another as they interpret and respond to new norms, practices, and expectations based on previous experiences.

A classic ethnographic study by Heath (1983) demonstrates the influences of student social and cultural experiences on schooling. Heath's study took place in the working class community of Roadville, among white residents, and Trackton, among black residents, with the central research question addressing the effect of home and community environments on the "learning of those language structures and uses which were needed in classrooms and job settings" (p. 4). Over a ten-year period, Heath became part of both communities in their homes, work places, and classrooms in order to experience the "natural flow of community and classroom life" (p. 8). She focused on each community's approach to language, and argued that the value and use of language in each group was "interdependent with the habits and values of behaving shared among members of that group" (p. 11). Both Roadville and Trackton had a variety of literacy traditions woven together in different ways with the uses of oral language, reading and writing, and ways of negotiating meaning, and yet, while both communities believed that schooling was a ticket up and out of their present situation, neither of the community's "ways with words" or language practices prepared the children for the school's ways of handling language (p. 235). This mismatch of social and cultural expectations led to schooling difficulties for the children from both communities.

Another, more recent, study that used a sociocultural conceptual framework, conducted by Kong and Pearson (2003), was a year-long examination of culturally diverse fourth and fifth graders as they participated in a literature-based instructional program. The assumption was that regardless of ethnic and cultural diversity, “learning and development occur as learners interact with more knowledgeable members of a community within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts in which all of the participants are striving to make sense of the messages they encounter” (p. 86). Kong and Pearson concluded as these culturally and linguistically diverse students were given the opportunity to actively engage in social interaction as they read, wrote, and talked about literature, when they were supported and guided by “more knowledgeable members of the community” (p. 114), learning took place and students were able to participate and function as members of the literacy community in their classrooms. However, these transitions into different communities are not always so seamless.

Students’ social backgrounds and past experiences can be influential in determining the level and kind of participation in the school community (see e.g., Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972). Recently, Fairbanks and Ariail (2006) conducted a three-year case study of three adolescent girls’ learning experiences. They worked with two Latinas and one African American. Their research focused on social and cultural dispositions the participants brought to various encounters, how they used these resources to negotiate their schooling identity, and the consequences of this process on their classroom and

school participation. Using data collection methods of classroom observations, videotaped lessons, and personal interviews, Fairbanks and Ariail followed these three girls through their middle school experiences. To analyze the data, Fairbanks and Ariail drew on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital and habitus to categorize resources as they related to student performance. Habitus, as defined in this study, meant "the dispositions, values, skills, and understandings individuals accumulate across their lifetimes" (p. 312). Each of the girls had different experiences in the school setting as a reflection of their individual habitus. Two of the students, because of their backgrounds, were more aligned with the expectations of schooling and were able to adjust to and accommodate the respective demands of each grade level; however, the third student found traditional school expectations "ran counter to the dispositions" (p. 341) she brought from home and therefore she had difficulties during her middle school years. Fairbanks and Ariail concluded that "the interaction between the habitus of the individual and the social and intellectual demands of the school context shape the individual's experience of school" (p. 314). As evidenced in this study, what students bring to a new community may either confound or facilitate their transition.

To summarize, the studies I have reviewed support the notion that writing is a social activity and transition from one writing community to another requires active participation and interaction with current members in order to acquire the expectations and practices of the new writing context. Using a sociocultural lens in my study, I

attempted to understand the process of entering and becoming a member of a new writing community for college freshmen. I sought to understand the meaning of the actions of varied students, including their writing, as they interacted with the teacher and their peers, and the resources they drew on to navigate and assimilate to their new writing community. I attempted to account for “the journey from the state of being and behaving like a novice to the state of being and behaving like an expert”(Sperling & Freedman, 2001, p. 372) in a college writing course for students who already demonstrated entry level ability and were in the position of newcomers to a recognized university-level experience.

Theoretical Framework

The dominant theory that framed my research comes from Wenger’s (1998) notion of “communities of practice.” According to Wenger, a “community of practice” is a group of people engaged in learning as they collectively discover rituals and routines that enable a shared approach to a common enterprise. This group shares concerns, problems, or passions about a topic, and deepens their knowledge through interaction while sharing frustrations, insights and advice. They become bound together as they respond to the situation, the goals, and the desires of the group as they develop a “body of common knowledge, practices and approaches...as well as personal relationships and established way of interacting” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). In this study, I see freshmen composition class as a “community of practice.”

From the beginning, I made several assumptions, as proposed by Wenger (1998), about how learning takes place, and about the nature of knowledge and knowing. In this approach, I assume all humans are social, all knowledge is contextual, interaction is where learning takes place and meaning is produced (Wenger, 1998). This participation/interaction does not refer merely to situations in which people engage in various activities together, but also to the processes of “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Important is not only the process of finding out what one needs to do to “belong” to a freshman writing class at the university, but also who one “is” within that classroom community as one writes and participates.

College students on campus are involved in defining a variety of pursuits as they interact with each other, the instructors, and institution of the university. As they respond to each other, they work at making sense of their social interactions, consequently constructing who they are within the academic community. During this process, particular practices evolve that reflect the history of the institution in which they are participating as well as the input and negotiation of newcomers to the existing entity. The sum of these practices during the pursuit of a common goal is what helps to define a community of practice, while requiring a certain type of work to become a recognized member.

This process of becoming a member within a new community involves learning. Traditionally, learning is defined as an internalization of knowledge, whether transmitted from one person to another, discovered independently, or through interaction with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This view suggests that learning is a process of absorption of knowledge without necessarily involving the broader context of the social world surrounding the learner. In contrast, the framework that guided my study looked at learning as increased participation in a community of practice as the learner negotiates and renegotiates his own identity while searching for meaning behind the enterprise as he discovers his place within this new community. Participating in a practice, implies involvement in activities, tasks (e.g. writing), functions, and understanding that reflects and exists in a broader context of social relations. This learning is not only a condition for membership, but the process itself is an evolving form of learning. In order to “learn” in a new community, it is imperative that the participant be more than just an observer, but instead participate in the practices of the community and the continual restructuring of the expectations, norms, and activities that make up the community’s framework. This framework includes what is said, what is done, who participates and who doesn’t. In short, it defines the characteristics of a member and the way of being in this community.

Thus, part of the process of becoming a member requires engagement in the practices of the particular community. This is the idea that students are mutually engaged in identifying the routines, norms, and expectations that define membership in the

community. This engagement in practices produces negotiated patterns of behavior that either enables the students to “fit” in or not. Understanding these identified practices also involves choosing what to know and what to ignore in order to proceed with the activity of joining this new community. Along with these practices, comes the need to find meaning behind them, which involves social interaction with each other and with the instructor, a type of negotiated give and take. This negotiation of meaning is a process shaped by a multitude of elements including, but not limited to, student, instructor, and university expectations, students’ self evaluation of abilities, students’ desire to join this new community, and their interpretation of just how to “fit” in as well as their level of willingness to engage in the practices. This mutual engagement does not suppose that the members are in some way homogeneous, but instead the diversity of the members is what fuels the negotiation of practices as the students exchange information, opinions, and ideas that are formed by the common goal of completing the freshman composition requirements. Each participant develops a unique identity, which is continually integrated and further defined through the course of mutual engagement. These shared practices may be ones of disagreement, challenges, or competition but all function to connect the participants in a variety of complex ways as they search for meaning and a place within the community. As well, a community of practice includes the “negotiation of a joint enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). This enterprise is not “joint” due to agreement, but as a shared response to the context, in this case, of the classroom and university.

Finally, a community of practice entails shared repertoires. These may include routines, ways of doing things (like writing), discourse, gestures, actions, or tools that this community has adopted and which become part of the practices. These repertoires are not necessarily a new invention but instead are a reflection of previous practices in that the norms, gestures, and routines have been previously established, and yet can be reengaged in a new situation as they take on new meanings. These resources have well established expectations such as requiring laptops for writing or cell phones for communication, but in the context of the freshman composition class may take on new meanings as students respond to the variety of constraints related to previous classes. These resources are then used to renegotiate the meaning of the practices in this particular community, and therefore are constantly changing and being reinterpreted.

As well as trying to define who they are within a particular community, students also have to deal with issues of multimembership. No student belongs to just one community. As well as being freshmen on a university campus, they are often roommates, friends, club members, employees, sons and daughters and so on. Each community has different ways of engaging in behaviors, different type of repertoires, and different ways of exhibiting membership. This multimembership translates into a significant challenge when entering a new community and may be complicated further by cultural differences. Each student brings with him or her a history of past experiences that mediates the interpretation of the new practices and shared repertoire within the new

community (Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006; Kong & Pearson, 2003; Langer & Applebee, 1986; Rogoff, 2003). Within an educational setting, the cultural resources and experiences a student brings to the new situation may conflict with the demands and expectations of the instructor and educational environment (Heath, 1983). This adds another layer and potential difficulties to being in a new group.

Relating to these notions, Gee (1992) has studied social and cultural interactions as people move in and out of particular groups. He views these social practices as “Discourses,” ways of being a certain type of person in a group. Gee’s “Discourses” encompass the entire act of communication. He says each Discourse is “owned and operated by a socioculturally defined group of people” (Gee, 1992, p. 107), and within a Discourse there is a particular way of “talking, acting, interacting, valuing, and believing” (p. 107), as well as dress, gestures, and body positions. Yet speaking the language, knowing the vocabulary, and using it appropriately facilitates, but does not guarantee, one’s becoming a member of a particular community. It is also imperative that the other members recognize one’s use of the Discourse, in a sense giving “permission” for a newcomer to join. If one uses the Discourse inappropriately, one is immediately identified as an outsider. Wenger (1998) frames this idea of permission in terms of “legitimacy” and says that in order to be a member, a student needs to be recognized as such and “must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members” (Wenger, 1998, p. 101). In the classroom, one way of granting of legitimacy comes from

the expert in the community, the instructor, for example in the form of response to students' writing or to their contributions in class. Student responses to these exchanges either further their membership in the community or help to create a non-membership status. In addition, the new Discourse cannot be learned just by listening to and observing the group (think of the "bullshitting" in Smagorinsky's 2010 study). Similar to Wenger's (1998) theoretical framework, Gee maintains that one must be actively engaged in the group's enterprise and must participate in the rituals, routines, behaviors, and language(s) of the group in a recognized competent manner in order to be considered a member.

Writing as Classroom Practice

The concept of written literacy--what it is, how it is learned, and what is considered competent writing--has long been a focus of discussion in public education (Sperling & DePardo, 2008). As seen earlier in this chapter, writing was researched and theorized as a mental or cognitive process, as was learning to write. A mechanistic interpretation of this process suggested that competent writing was the ability to compose "error-free, standard written English"(see Flower, 1994, p. 1) or the ability to write a coherent five-paragraph essay (see Emig, 1971). Still others privileged the ability to "read, write, and talk about some valued body of knowledge such as the traditional literary canon of the middle class"(see Flower, 1994, p. 1). However, concepts of literacy, including writing, have expanded to include literacies in the plural, "defined as diverse discourse practices that grow out of the needs and values of different

communities” (Brandt, 1990; Flower, 1994, p. 2; Gee, 1992, 2010; Kong & Pearson, 2003), which need to be studied from cultural and social perspectives (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Because communities have different ways of behaving and interacting, the role and importance of written language within a particular community is determined by habits and values shared by members of the group (Gee, 2010; Heath, 1983; Langer & Applebee, 1986; Rogoff, 2003).

This shifting of attention away from a focus on particular and specific features of a text, or of components of cognition, leads to a focus on literacy *practices* (Brandt, 1990, 2011; Flower, 1994). From this view, literacy, including writing, is shaped by the way people interpret and respond to each other as they construct new knowledge in the search for meaning in the very literate acts in which they are engaging. In other words, writing is not merely just putting pen to paper, but instead writing is constructed in, influenced by, and given meaning based on the particularities of a context or community and the interaction of its members (Brandt, 1990, 1995; Heath, 1983; Nystrand, 1986; Nystrand & Himley, 1984; Sperling, 1993).

In Conclusion

Mutual engagement, negotiated practices, and developed repertoires make up a community of practice. Each can give rise to a meaningful experience for its members as well as, conversely, hold members hostage to that experience (Wenger, 1998). Key to my

study is the concept that students in Freshman Composition are, theoretically, looking for meanings behind the practices to better adapt themselves to this particular community. The choices and interpretations students make in relation to their behaviors or way of being in the group can affect the writing they produce and whether they conform or not to their perceived expectations for behaving as a college level writer. What can be learned by examining their attempts to become members of the college writing community? This question gave rise to the focus of my research and the following research questions.

Research Questions

In order to understand the experience of first year students in a freshman writing class, I asked the following research questions, focusing on one class and a range of students in that class.

A. Participation

- What are the negotiated repertoires and routines of the group that emerged during the quarter?
- How did the students participate in the negotiated repertoires and routines, both inside and outside the classroom?
- What were the stated expectations of the University, the Freshman Composition 1 program, and the instructor, for Freshman Composition 1? How were these expectations played out in the classroom?
- From students' perspectives, what types of challenges do they face and what types of expectations do they bring to the class and how do they try to overcome them?

- From instructor’s perspective, what types of challenges or problems do these students face in participating and how do they seem to overcome them?

B. Writing

- What types of successes and struggles are evidenced in student writing?
- How does the instructor provide access/legitimacy to the community of college writers for freshmen student through both verbal and written feedback?
- What does students’ writing reveal about their “becoming” college writers and how did students see themselves as such?

The ultimate goal in this study was to contribute to our understanding of the social/cultural process involved as freshmen students attempt to enter the college writing community in order to provide a way of talking about and facilitating this often difficult process for students.

The following chapters discuss the process and findings of my study. Chapter 2 covers the methodology and analysis process used to gather and interpret my data. Chapter 3 is the framework for Freshman Composition 1 as it relates to the characteristics of a community of practice and how those characteristics played out in the classroom. Chapters 4 – 7 each address one focal student, his/her experiences as a novice in the college writing community and

his/her essays produced for the class along with three different interpretations of the writing. The process of each student's movement toward membership or conversely away from membership through choices of participation and the granting of legitimacy are also discussed. Each focal student chapter concludes with three key findings for the student. Chapter 8 summarizes the study, describes key findings overall, and recommends areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Methodology and Analysis Process

Design of the research

As indicated in Chapter 1, I conducted an interpretive case study of a Freshman Composition class at a four-year university. I spent ten weeks, three days a week (each day the class met for the duration of one academic quarter), observing and recording activities and interactions in the class itself, interviewing the teacher and several students, as well as collecting student writing samples and other documentation of curriculum and expectations for the observed class. Because I was interested in the initial experiences of freshmen in college writing, my study took place during the first quarter of the academic year. Note that pseudonyms were used for the names of my focal students, the instructor, official documents, locations, and any reference that would be recognizable in order to protect the privacy of the exact location or persons involved in this study.

By adopting an interpretive approach to this research, I attempted to answer the questions of what was happening, specifically, in this particular setting and what these actions meant to the participants. (Erickson, 1986; Geertz, 1973). As Erickson (1986) points out, gaining “the immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actor’s point of view” (p. 119) is a crucial aspect of interpretive research and the theoretical assumptions of this type of study is that people act and react according to their

own interpretation of the world around them. In a similar manner, Bellack (1978) defines interpretive researchers as ones who “look to the reasons, intentions, or purposes of teachers and students to gain understanding of why things happen as they do in the classroom” (p. 36).

According to Bogdan (2007), the researcher’s goal is to “better understand human behavior and experience” and the method of “empirical observation” (p. 43) provides concrete examples of human behavior. Using an interpretive approach allowed me to observe the students and to attempt to document their process of meaning making and responding as they entered this new community of college writers. Wenger (1998) calls this “negotiation of meaning” (p. 53). These negotiations are what humans go through when they are faced with a new context and a new community of practice. As I took on the role of observer and interviewer within the Freshmen Composition class, I brought with me the theoretical framework of how communities of practice function and are formed and therefore was able to categorize the student activity and self-revelations as they negotiated successfully or not, this new community. Ultimately, because the focus of my study was what constitutes incoming freshmen’s experience in freshman composition, and how participants interact, respond, and produce writing based on their own interpretations of the context, an interpretive approach was ideal.

As indicated in Chapter 1, to the best of my knowledge, students who have already proved themselves capable writers according to the University entrance exam

have not been a focus for such study. My research on this type of situation provides a fresh perspective on entering a writing community from students who are assumed to already be “school savvy” and therefore able to seamlessly transition into a college writing situation.

Setting

South Western (SW) University’s 1200 acres sprawl across a park-like campus. It is dedicated to teaching, research, and public service, and is part of a larger university system. SW University’s 2012 enrollment exceeded 20,000 (approximately 18,500 undergraduate students and 2,500 graduate students) and is the most ethnically diverse University in the system. The ethnicity profile is as follows: 39.9% Asian/Asian Americans, 28.9% Chicanos and Latinos, 17.0 % White/ Caucasian, 7.9% African/American, .4% Native American, and 4.5% other ethnicities. The University offers offers: 80 bachelor degree programs, 46 master's degree programs, 38 Ph.D. programs and 17 teaching and administrative credential programs. Once a small university in a small town, it is now one of the premier research and educational institutions in the region.

The course in which I conducted my research is part of the *Introduction to College Composition Program* housed within the English Department. Prior to enrolling in the Composition sequence (three courses), all students are required to satisfy the Entry

Level Writing Requirement, a reading and writing proficiency requirement set up by the university system. There are many ways to satisfy this requirement. Of the instructors for Freshman Composition 1, 55% are lecturers, while 45% are Graduate Teaching Assistants (TA). The TAs are required to have a year of training, as well as a senior Lecturer mentor for the first quarter they teach. There is an annual two to three days fall orientation for all instructors (lecturers and TAs). TAs teaching for the first time have an additional two days of training. Finally, all instructors who teach in the entry level program must also participate in the norming and grading meetings for the final exam. Freshman Composition 1 is capped at 23 students per section and four sections were offered in the fall of 2011. According to SW's *University Introduction to College Composition Policies 2011 – 2012*, consecutive classes are an introduction to reading and writing strategies, as well as a variety of essay genres. "The program as a whole provides freshmen with a broad literacy education" and ideally, students complete the program prepared to enter a community of writers who know how to think about, analyze, and consequently produce the variety of writing tasks with which they will be faced for the next four years and beyond.

The three levels of Freshman Composition classes, 1, 2, and 3, are taken in sequential order. Freshman Composition 1 focuses on narrative, descriptive, and expository writing; Freshman Composition 2 on argumentation; and Freshman Composition 3 on textual analysis and semiotics, the reading and writing of cultural

signs. This program is referred to in the manual as “the cornerstone of a liberal arts education.” Throughout the three quarters, students are taught to “investigate, organize, and understand themselves and their world.” These skills are reinforced through selected readings, class discussions, outside research, and student produced papers. Upon completion of these three classes, students, ideally, are equipped to approach any type of written assignment they may face in subsequent classes throughout their university experiences.

Class and Instructor Selection

In choosing a class to study, I first spoke with the head of the Introduction to College Composition Program for recommendations of well regarded instructors who were experienced in teaching Freshman Composition. I wanted this type of instructor, one familiar with this class, as he or she would be the one setting the standard for the classroom discourse as the “expert” for the students. As I observed Freshman Composition 1 in an attempt to identify the processes of students entering a new community, the interactions between an expert and the novices are part of what I was observing. The head of the program recommended two long time lecturers. I interviewed both of them as to their philosophy on teaching, students, and the Freshman Composition program as a whole, including their expectations and curricular requirements for the class. Similar to my desire for an experienced instructor, I wanted an instructor whose philosophy was to make this writing community accessible for incoming students and

whose ultimate goal was for the students to be successful in their attempts to enter the college writing community. Both of the recommended instructors were open to my sitting in on their classes for the quarter and were willing to be interviewed throughout my time there and talk about their perspectives on the students and student entry experiences into this new writing community. I interviewed both instructors individually for 20-30 minutes in their office and observed both of their classes for the initial session of the quarter.

While both instructors were equally interested in participating in my study, I chose Dr. Jackson for several reasons. During the first day of class, Dr. Jackson was organized and clear about the curriculum requirements for his class. He had a calm and inviting teaching style as he addressed these new students and welcomed them to the university. He “apologized” with humor when he talked about the required textbook’s cost and weight. He went over the syllabus in detail and at the end of the class, he listed on the board five criteria he used to grade essays: evidence of reading comprehension, unity, development, coherence, and proper use of Standard English. He also wrote his office hours and location on the board, inviting students to come see him if they needed help. When I asked him during our initial interview about his ultimate goal for his students, he said it was for them to be “competent at the basic expository tasks” by the end of the quarter. When I explained the focus of my research, Dr Jackson remarked, “This is a study that needs to be done.” Because Dr. Jackson was experienced, had

explained his expectations in a clear and specific manner, and appeared to connect with the students through humor and availability, I chose to observe in Dr. Jackson's class.

Dr. Jackson

Dr Jackson is a veteran teacher. He attended this same university as a Masters student and continued there to complete his PhD. While in graduate school, he was a Teaching Assistant (TA) and, after graduating, taught at a variety of community colleges as well as the university. He had taught Freshman Composition off and on since 1989.

Student Selection

I selected four students in Dr. Jackson's class to focus on during the quarter. I did so as follows:

On the first day of class, Dr. Jackson briefly introduced me and gave me time to summarize why I was there and why I needed volunteers to be part of my study. I distributed a consent form to the 22 students in the class that asked them if they would be willing to be interviewed two to three times throughout the quarter, audio-taped and possibly video-taped, as well as share their written work with me. I assured them their participation in my study would not affect their grades or evaluations in this class. Pseudonyms would be used in place of their names to protect their privacy. Out of the 22 forms distributed in the class, I received back 19 signed by students who agreed to interviews along with audio and video taping, two signed by students who agreed to

audio-taping but not videotaping, and one signed by a student who agreed to videotaping but not audio-taping. I then considered the backgrounds of the 19 students who agreed to be considered as a volunteer. I wanted students, high school June graduates, who were of diverse social and cultural backgrounds in order to obtain a meaningful variety of experiences. I observed the students in the classroom setting, such as where they sat, how they interacted with other students and the instructor, their behaviors during class. After informal conversations with the students and based on the various criterion listed above, I settled on a subset of four focal students for my study. My subset, limited in number, allowed me to delve deeply into the freshman writing experience for a range of students and allowed me to discover key issues relative to students moving from high school to college. Following is a brief portrait of each of these four students, all of whom were born within the same large geographic area, a small part of which subsumes SW University.

Kevin

Kevin's family is Indian and came from a small town in India. Both of his parents are college educated. Kevin is not a native speaker of English and did not speak English until the age of six. His two sisters each attend a university and a college education was "expected" by his parents. Kevin believed himself to be an "average" writer, but felt he had some good training in high school and therefore was not overly concerned about his ability to produce college level writing.

Becky

Becky is Hispanic and English is her second language. Most of her family resides in Mexico. She didn't tell me about her parents' level of education, but similar to Mark she felt pressure to be successful. She admitted that in writing, her biggest struggle was switching from Spanish to English, but she knew where to go to get help and was willing to take advantage of that opportunity. She had to complete a summer English class at the university in order to qualify for this Freshman Composition class.

Dona

Dona's father is Hispanic, while her mother is half Hispanic and half Caucasian. Both of her parents graduated early from high school to help with family finances. She is the first in her family to attend the University. Dona is comfortable with her writing ability coming in, but knows she will have to work hard to produce college level writing.

Mark

Mark is Korean. He attended a math magnet high school, but he said the reason he was accepted into the school was that his sister had attended before him. Neither of his parents graduated from high school and both spoke limited English. His sister, fluent in English, was a junior at a state university. He was not very confident in his writing ability and felt pressure from his family to succeed.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Classroom Observations

I took on the role of observer in the context of the selected classroom and sat in on the classroom Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2:10 to 3:00 over the course of the ten week quarter from September – December, 2011. Sitting in the back of the classroom allowed me to observe unobtrusively and experience firsthand what students said and did as they interacted with their peers and instructor (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). One to one informal conversations with the students and instructor in the classroom context added to my observational data. I took field notes while observing to capture what went on in the classroom itself and then typed up my notes in detail immediately afterwards, filling in from memory when needed. I audio recorded classroom sessions that I observed in order to further document the nuances of social interaction and conversation. This, too, helped me to fill in and expand my field notes.

Interviews

Interviews within interpretive research can range from the informal conversation before the beginning of class or in the parking lot to formally prearranged meetings in a restricted environment where no one else is listening except the interviewer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). While it is true that information gained in an interview is subject to participants' perspectives as well as the interviewer's presence, it is still possible to use

these data to illuminate these perspectives as well as meanings behind actions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Student Interviews

I conducted individual interviews with each of the focal students at different times throughout the study, including one to three formal interviews with each focal student, in order to try to understand their perspectives on their experience over time. I found a place upstairs in the building where the class was held, and I met there individually with each student either before or after class. Because each student had other classes, our time was limited to 25 – 30 minutes for each interview, but the students were forthcoming and open about their experiences as well as willing to share most of their written work. The formal interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for later analysis. The interview questions were semi-structured, yet I remained flexible as often the conversation took a different turn when participants began to tell their own story of their experience. Initially, I asked questions related to what types of challenges they expected to face as they entered the college writing community and how they planned to address them. I wanted to know what skills and knowledge they believed they brought to this experience and whether those skills would help or hinder their transition into college writing. As the quarter progressed, I asked them about their writing experiences in high school, how they saw themselves as writers, and whether or not they felt they were “becoming” college writers. In our final conversations, we reviewed their initial concerns and whether or not they had

materialized. We talked about their overall experience of entering college level writing, how they ultimately saw themselves as participants, and whether or not they considered themselves successful, based on their own definition of success as well as on their understanding of the instructor's definition.

Instructor Interviews

In addition to the focal students, I interviewed the instructor, formally and informally, throughout my study. Through my questions, I attempted to understand more about the instructor's philosophy on teaching, teaching experience, and the design of the curriculum. I asked him about his perception of the student experience and the challenges students faced upon entering a new writing community as well as the social and interactional expectations for the class. I wanted to know the instructor's perspective on how students overcame challenges and what skills and knowledge they brought to the classroom that helped or hindered the experience. Finally, I wanted to know his definition of a successful college level writer and how he knew when a student had achieved this level of success as a writer, and what kinds of changes in student writing he saw as students progressed through the quarter.

Document Collection

Student writing

According to SW's *Introduction to College Composition Program*, the textbook for this class, *Elements of Writing*, provided the basic structure of the class. Chapter 1 was an introduction to the text and Chapters 2 - 5 each defined a particular genre of writing and the curriculum and assigned essays directly correlated with the textbook chapters.

Chapter 2, "Remembering an Event," introduced students to writing about their own significant personal experience using memory search, careful word choices, and the selection of telling details to support and convey a central idea.

Chapter 3, "Writing Profiles," introduced students to ethnographic field research — observation and interview — plus other evidence-gathering techniques to research a new place and activity.

Chapter 4, "Explaining a Concept," and Chapter 5, "Explaining Opposing Positions," introduced students to library and Internet research, requiring the analysis, synthesis, and comparison of information gleaned from a variety of sources. All of the chapters in *Elements of Writing* taught students close reading, but these two chapters focused also on the proper use and documentation of sources. Chapter 5 also served as a transition to Freshman Composition 2 by teaching students to analyze written arguments.

The first essay students wrote was a narrative, a look at themselves and a significant personal memory that required an explanation to the reader of a central idea. The second essay, a profile, required students to look beyond themselves to other people or places as they attempted to sufficiently describe to the reader, a person, place or event in enough detail to recreate the focus of the essay for the reader. The third essay, explaining a concept, familiarized students with research strategies, MLA format, and writing techniques needed to help readers understand and appreciate the topic of this type of writing. The final essay was an introduction to analysis of written arguments, a genre that would be covered in more detail in Freshman Composition 2.

Each essay that was assigned was outlined specifically in a handout as to the topic, where to find help in the textbook, and page and formatting requirements. There were specific due dates for both a draft and a final copy and the directive to submit the essay to the “Mywork” website in order to receive credit. This website is a guard against plagiarism.

Over the course of the quarter, students wrote five final essays. The first four required drafts that were due in class prior to the final due date. Two of these drafts were read by students other than the writer, and a “Response form” was filled out by the reader as to whether or not the student writer had addressed the criteria the instructor had discussed for that particular essay.

By the end of the quarter, I had three to four drafts, some of which were the final drafts including instructor comments, of essays from each focal student, out of the five written all quarter. The fifth and final essay was the students' final exam; I was not able to obtain a copy. Only two of my focal students gave me three essays that included the final grade and instructor comments and proof reading marks.

Other writing that was done in the class consisted of the peer responses worksheet on the rough drafts of Essays 1 and 2, short answer quizzes on three of the short stories in the textbook, and two quizzes based on the reading assigned from the previous session. I did not collect the quizzes and only collected a handful of the peer responses written about my focal students' essays by other students as my focal students did not share these with me.

Classroom documents

Along with student writing, I collected all documentation related to this class including the syllabus, assignment instructions, course materials, evaluations and all additional relevant written materials both inside and outside of class (such as from the department or University). Such documentation allowed me to further understand the expectations and cultural norms and values of the university and instructor as well as the overall expectations and philosophy for this particular class.

Data Analysis

Analysis is described on the following pages. Table1 gives an overview of the connections between my research questions, the data sources that helped answer each question, and the kind of data analysis that I used for each data source.

Overall Question: What is the experience of entering the college composition community, and what can we learn from students' writing in this context.

Table 1

Data Analysis

Research Sub - Questions	Data Source	Data Analysis
<u>A. Participation</u> What are the negotiated repertoires and routines of the group that emerged during the quarter?	Field notes, classroom observations	Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998): Identification of repeated instructional and non-instructional behaviors and activities occurring throughout the quarter
How did the students participate in the negotiated repertoires and routines, both inside and outside the classroom?	Field notes, classroom observations, audio recorded classroom sessions; student and instructor transcribed interviews	Content/Thematic analysis (Huckin, 2004) of student participation in relation to classroom repertoires and routines

<p>What were the stated expectations of the University, the Freshman Composition 1 program, and the instructor, for Freshman Composition 1? How were these expectations played out in the classroom?</p>	<p>Field notes, classroom observations, audio recorded classroom sessions; documents from the University, the Freshman Composition 1 syllabus, and the instructor; instructor transcribed interviews</p>	<p>Rich feature (Barton, 2004) and content analysis (Huckin, 2004); Identification of patterns of articulated expectations and use of discourse both in written and oral forms</p>
<p>From students' perspectives, what types of challenges do they face and what types of expectations do they bring to the class and how do they try to overcome them?</p>	<p>Field notes, classroom observations, audio recorded classroom sessions; student transcribed interviews</p>	<p>Content/thematic analysis (Huckin, 2004) of student statements about challenges and problems and how problems are addressed; students' direct and indirect responses to expectations as evidenced by their participation in classroom routines</p>
<p>From instructor's perspective, what types of challenges or problems do these students face in participating and how do they seem to overcome them?</p>	<p>Field notes, classroom observations, audio recorded classroom sessions; instructor transcribed interviews</p>	<p>Content/thematic analysis (Huckin, 2004) of instructor statements about students' challenges, problems, and successes</p>
<p><u>B. Writing</u></p>		
<p>What types of successes and struggles are evidenced in student writing?</p>	<p>Student writing and instructor written feedback on essays</p>	<p>Application of (a) SWU's six point holistic rubric, (b) instructor's rubric to student essays, (c) content analysis (Huckin, 2004) and rich feature analysis (Barton, 2004) of instructor feedback.</p>

<p>How does the instructor provide access/legitimacy to the community of college writers for freshmen student through both verbal and written feedback?</p>	<p>Field notes, classroom observations, audio recorded classroom sessions; instructor's transcribed interviews; written and oral feedback on student essays</p>	<p>Evidence of opportunities of access and legitimacy (Wenger, 1998) through teacher and student language and discourse during instruction and apart from instruction; Content analysis (Huckin, 2004) and rich feature analysis (Barton, 2004): Focus on ways of questioning, commenting, framing; uses of devices for engaging listeners such as humor, inclusive talk in various contexts</p>
<p>What does students' writing reveal about their "becoming" college writers and how did students see themselves as such?</p>	<p>Student writing; student transcribed interviews</p>	<p>Evidence of changes in writing in three successive essays during the quarter; thematic analysis of student comments in relation to their progress towards membership</p>

A. Participation

Repertoires and Routines

To better understand the student experience in a freshman composition class as they enter the college writing community, I analyzed the observational data-- field notes and audio tapes -- using the framework of Wenger's (1998) community of practice. For my study, repertoires were those shared activities and artifacts that, over time, became a

part of the community and therefore accepted practice. The routines were the implicit and explicit expectations and practices, those in place at the beginning and those developed over time, shaping student participation.

When analyzing the data, I first looked for specific repertoires that surfaced regularly in this classroom and how they were constructed. Were they made obvious by statements, written documents, classroom discussions, or instructor direction or were they more subtly implied? What were the “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts” (Wenger 1998 p. 83) that became part of this community and how did they add to or help overcome the challenges students faced? How were the repertoires used and interpreted to pursue a successful entry into the writing community?

I next looked for patterns of behavior or particular routines, both inside and outside the classroom, which occurred repeatedly throughout the quarter i.e., student use of technology during class, coming prepared and on time to class, student clothing, being actively involved in whole class or small group discussion, office visits to the instructor, and student responses to verbal and written feedback from the instructor. Nystrand (1986) also writes about this process, in terms of student responses to expectations and constraints within particular discourses. He talks of the importance of establishing an understood frame of reference and how it is constructed as each participant interprets each other’s responses and subsequently adjusts ensuing comments based on the latest

information. I looked for patterns in how the discourse changed, was reshape, and established and maintained through comments, gestures, and feedback both from each other and the instructor. These patterns, in turn, shaped the routines, both explicit and implicit, that became a part of being in this classroom.

Student Participation

To look at participation in the group, I drew upon Wenger's (1998) definition of participation as the "active involvement in social enterprises" (p. 55) which shapes the member as well as the community. After routines are established in a group, they are perpetuated through the membership's participation. Therefore, in addition to the emerging routines, I looked at the participation and response of my focal students to these routines. Did they actively participate or did they remain on the periphery of the class? Did they show up on time ready to work, or arrive unprepared and therefore not ready to participate in classroom activities, did they engage in group discussions, and did they visit the instructor during office hours? I also looked for patterns of interaction between the instructor and students as well as between student and student. How did students respond to the instructor, both inside and outside the classroom? Was there opportunity for students to ask questions, have discussions, or interact directly with the instructor? How did students respond to stated and implied expectations of the University, Freshman Composition 1, and instructor for appropriate college level writing? How did these

expectations appear to influence their writing? How did they make sense of these classroom routines and interpret their value with regard to community membership?

Using a combination of the above factors (repertoires, routines, and student participation) in a functioning community allowed me to form a descriptive account of the classroom and of the experiences of the freshmen in Freshman Composition 1.

Institutional and Instructor Expectations

The composition program at SW University is defined by a set of formal expectations developed by the institution and were set forth in two specific documents: *Introduction to College Composition Program*, and the Freshman Composition 1 syllabus. In addition to being formally written, the instructor also reiterated these expectations verbally in the classroom. I studied these documents for what they told me about the underlying philosophy of the University, class curriculum, and instructor. I also looked for explicit and implicit expectations surrounding these documents within the classroom discourse. This type of background helped to contextualize the experience of the students by giving me a broader perspective on what influenced and directed this particular classroom. However, these formal expectations often played out differently in the classroom's day to day routines and instructional discourse.

Using Barton's (2004) "rich feature analysis" and Huckin's (2004) "content analysis," which look at particular patterns of a text such as words, phrases, or concepts

and the “connection between structure and function” (Barton, 2004, p. 66), I looked at the written documents and verbal classroom instruction for expectations of Freshman Composition and how those expectations were communicated to the students. I looked at repeated discourse elements and their meaning as it related to the specific context in which it appeared. Were there repeated patterns of concepts and vocabulary and did they carry the same meaning in the University document, the syllabus, and classroom instruction? I also looked for ways these expectations played out in the classroom. Did the instruction match the University’s written expectations or was there a different emphasis in the actual classroom?

I also interviewed the instructor about his personal expectations for this class. From these interviews, audio recorded and transcribed, I gained a better understanding of the instructor’s perception of the students in the class, his expectations for the students, as well as his overall philosophy of freshman composition. I looked for emerging themes that enabled me to understand why what was done and taught made sense to the instructor, paying attention to what was said as well as to the instructor’s language choices. Did the instructor’s view of student participation in class lead to the instructor’s perception of freshmen overall? And did this view influence what went on in the classroom and how the instructor set up the classroom expectations, which in turn directly influenced student participation and engagement?

Using my observational data, transcribed instructor interviews, and classroom documents, I looked for patterns of discourse and their meaning, based on the context of where they appeared and how they were used in the classroom.

Challenges and Expectations

Student Perspective

During the quarter, I interviewed each of my focal students three different times, with the exception of one student who was not available for the second and third interviews as he told me he had prior commitments. I analyzed the transcripts for emerging themes and how patterns between them related to their expectations at the beginning of the quarter and the challenges anticipated, and how they planned to respond. I asked what they were most concerned about in terms of meeting the expectations of the class and what did they expect in the way of challenges. Were the challenges cognitive issues (not understanding what is being asked), procedural expectations (how to begin, choose a topic, or generate supporting ideas), or basic mechanics of writing (university level style English)? I asked what skills they felt they brought to the class and if they felt prepared for college writing. Was their knowledge mostly general knowledge (concepts, definitions, common knowledge), procedural (*how* to use the general knowledge) or conditional (not only how to use their skills, but *when* is each skill appropriate) (Beaufort, 1999; McCarthy, 1987; Smagorinsky et al., 2010)? I looked not only for patterns of concern, but also patterns of response to the challenges and how it influenced their levels

of participation and engagement in the classroom. Based on their responses to the classroom expectations, were they able to adjust and move towards membership or were they further removed from the community as the quarter progressed?

Instructor Perspective

The instructor was a 17 year veteran of teaching Freshman Composition. I wanted to know his perspective on the challenges that freshmen students faced when entering this new writing community. In our three interviews and through his response to students' writing, I asked about challenges common to freshmen in general and then to this class in particular. Were the same issues emerging as he expected? To what did he attribute the challenges in writing that he saw in this class? Were they typical or did he see anything different based on the students in this particular class? How did students in the past respond and how did they try to navigate their way through the difficulties? I looked for emerging themes in his answers about student challenges, problems, and successes.

B. Writing

Student writing

I looked closely at the student writing, what was produced, how it was produced, and any changes within the writing in response to instructor and classroom expectations. As mentioned previously, the students in Freshman Composition had either competently passed the writing entrance examination administered by the University, successfully

completed the summer session offered as a prerequisite, received 680 or better on the SAT writing test, received 3 or above on the AP Examination in English, or received a 5 or better on an International Baccalaureate Higher Level English A exam. These students had already achieved a certain level of writing competence and therefore legitimacy as college writers. After collecting focal student writing, I selected key assignments to further analyze and used two other readers beside myself to strengthen the reliability of my analysis.

While my analysis of student writing was guided by a working definition of “college level writing,” I realized that college level writing is difficult to define and changes based on the institution, the rhetorical situation, the level of education, as well as the students involved (Blau, 2006; Sullivan, 2006; White, 2006). Therefore for the purpose of my study, I looked at each student essay from three different perspectives in order to create a more complete picture of my focal students’ writing. The first perspective was based on the university’s rubric for college level writing and each essay was read and scored by me and two other readers using this rubric. The second perspective was based on the instructor’s expectations as evidenced from classroom discussions, classroom handouts, and written comments and editing marks on the student essays.

Returning to several of the studies previously mentioned, I drew upon studies of student writing to build a framework for my own analysis of my focal students’ writing

and what we can learn through their use of language as they try, either successfully or not, to write as competent college level writers. Multiple studies have been conducted to determine characteristics defining the quality of student writing such as issues of Standard English usage and correctness (Shaughnessy, 1977), intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004), and textual cohesion and coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Witte & Faigley, 1981). In addition to structural elements, one of the paradoxes of writing as a freshman is writing as both a novice and an expert (Sommers & Saltz, 2004). When asked to address a particular topic, college freshmen have been seen not to know what is important and what is superfluous, giving equal weight to everything in addition to the inability to discern how different pieces of information are related to each other. Looking at student produced writing from a different perspective, Smagorinsky (2010) concluded that if a student was able to conform to common discourse conventions and use knowledge of the genre of academic writing and particular features, she could write in such a manner as to create the impression that her content knowledge was adequate when, in reality, it wasn't. This tactic has been seen to be used by incoming members of the college writing community to create the impression of "belonging" by appearing to write in a scholarly manner. In yet another study, Bartholomae (1985) studied student writing and found that for students to speak with authority, they needed to speak through the voice and code of those with authority, the professor's, and they had to do this before they knew what they were doing as writers. Taking all that into account and using the university rubric and the

instructor's criteria of correctness and content expectations, I formed the framework for the first two perspectives of text analysis of my focal students' essays.

The third perspective that I took to student writing was based on the instructor's granting of legitimacy to the students and how this was reflected in his comments and in student writing. This perspective goes beyond the surface of the text to look for ways the student writing evidenced the writer's membership as a college writer particularly in response to classroom instruction and written feedback. As mentioned above, along with the need to speak with authority in order to appear to be a member, one needs to be recognized as such by the current expert, in this case, the instructor (Bartholomae, 1985; Wenger, 1998). This recognition can come in the form of oral "invitations" to join the college writing community or through written comments on student essays that served to shape the role of the instructor and the students as well as the relationship between them. This legitimacy is important because newcomers' attempts to join a new community often fall short, but if they have been granted a certain level of legitimacy, all their mistakes and misunderstandings are opportunities for learning rather than dismissal (Wenger, 1998). This process of gaining of legitimacy and the avenues offered by the instructor are what I used to define my third perspective.

Perspective #1 – The University's Rubric

The holistic writing placement rubric (see Table 2) of SW University assesses the development of support for the response to the prompt, elaboration levels of ideas and

connections, word choice, sentence structure, and the use of Standard English conventions. While this is not an absolute standard for college writing, it is an evaluative tool used by SW University to determine student ability to write at a college level, as defined by the university system of which my research site is a part, therefore giving my research a point of reference in determining the quality of student work. It is interesting to note that within the criteria, primary importance is attached to student response to the prompt supported by a certain level of elaboration and evidence, going from “cogent” to “thoughtful,” all the way to “a disregard of the topic’s demand.” Next the rubric addresses word choice, sentence variety, and finally, at the end of each level of criteria, grammar and usage. Based on the rubric, it appears that thinking and responding take precedence over grammatical correctness in college level writing.

As is common practice when grading multiple papers, the focal students’ essays (15 total) were read and scored independently by two readers and myself. The first reader is a 31-year veteran high school teacher. He has taught all levels of English, from grades nine to 12, including AP English for the past 13 years. In addition to teaching, he was a reader/grader of AP exams in 2005 as well as a reader/grader for the High School Proficiency Exams for four years. The second reader has taught at the community college and university level in the composition program for over 20 years. Each essay was scored independently according to SW University’s six point rubric and, as the scores were the same or less than one point apart, the points were averaged together.

Table 2

SW University 6 Point Writing Rubric

Holistic Score	Description
6	A 6 paper commands attention because of its insightful development and mature style. It presents a cogent response to the text, elaborating that response with well-chosen examples and persuasive reasoning. The 6 paper shows that its writer can usually choose words aptly, use sophisticated sentences effectively, and observe the conventions of written English.
5	A 5 paper is clearly competent. It presents a thoughtful response to the text, elaborating that response with appropriate examples and sensible reasoning. A 5 paper typically has a less fluent and complex style than a 6, but does show that its writer can usually choose words accurately, vary sentences effectively, and observe the conventions of written English.
4	A 4 paper is satisfactory, sometimes marginally so. It presents an adequate response to the text, elaborating that response with sufficient examples and this reasoning will ordinarily be less

developed than those in 5 papers, so will the 4 paper's style be less effective. Nevertheless, a 4 paper shows that its writer can usually choose words of sufficient precision, control sentences of reasonable variety, and observe the conventions of written English.

3 A **3** paper is unsatisfactory in one or more of the following ways. It may respond to the text illogically; it may lack coherent structure or elaboration with examples; it may reflect an incomplete understanding of the text or the topic. Its prose is usually characterized by at least one of the following: frequently imprecise word choice; little sentence variety; occasional major errors in grammar and usage, or frequent minor errors.

2 A **2** paper shows serious weaknesses, ordinarily of several kinds. It frequently presents a simplistic, inappropriate, or incoherent response to the text, one that may suggest some significant misunderstanding of the text or the topic. Its prose is usually characterized by at least one of the following: simplistic or inaccurate word choice; monotonous or fragmented sentence structure; many repeated errors in grammar and usage.

1 A **1** paper suggests severe difficulties in reading and writing conventional English. It may disregard the topic's demands, or it

may lack any appropriate pattern of structure or development. It may be inappropriately brief. It often has a pervasive pattern of errors in word choice, sentence structure, grammar, and usage.

Perspective #2 - The Instructor's Rubric

The second perspective was based on the instructor's class instruction and discussions of his expectations for writing, as well as his written feedback on student essays. Twelve of the fifteen essays my students shared with me were the final copies that included the instructor's written comments and corrections. For each essay, I counted the number and type of errors the instructor had marked and created a chart for each essay reflecting the count. This perspective allowed me to view student writing based on the instructor's expectations regarding grammar and structure. It also allowed for a comparison, side-by-side of the three essays, of any changes in the writing over the course of the quarter.

Table 3 shows Dr. Jackson's proofreading marks, which appeared on the student essays, most of which he went over specifically with the class.

Table 3

Dr. Jackson's proof reading marks and abbreviations

Proof reading mark/symbol	Description
✓	good narrative details
☆	good descriptive details
<u> </u>	evidence of significance/reflection
<u><u> </u></u>	good word choice
□	Good specific detail
~~~~~	error in word choice
(squiggly line under word(s))	error in word choice
Agr	error in subject/verb agreement
Coh	error in coherence
Comp	error in comprehension of text
CS	comma splice
Dev	needs more development
Dig	digression/ problems with unity
Exact	inexact word

Frag	sentence fragment
Lc	lower case
Logic	illogical transition
Mixed	mixed construction
Num	error in use of numbers
Ref	error in pronoun reference
Shift	shift in tense, person, number, mood, voice, or from direct to indirect discourse
T	error in verb tense
Trans	transition error
Usage	incorrect word choice
Voice	ineffective use of passive voice
W	wordy
Wc	ineffective word choice
Ww	wrong word

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### Perspective #3 – Writing at the College Level

As previously mentioned, determining just what was college level writing beyond the surface characteristics of students' writing has been a long and complicated conversation (Blau, 2010; Flower, 1979; Sullivan, 2006). In an attempt to go beyond surface characteristics, for the purposes of my study, I focused on students' gaining of

legitimacy as college writers based on classroom instruction, written feedback, and office visits, as well as how student writing reflected these *avenues* to membership in the community.

Unless a newcomer in a new community is granted enough legitimacy to be treated as a potential member, their eventual access to membership may be jeopardized (Wenger, 1998). This legitimacy may be granted in multiple ways, such as through a sponsorship or building of relationships. I looked at the way the instructor offered access to the students through oral comments in the classroom and written feedback on student essays, as well as his offering of office hours and time outside the classroom. Drawing again on Barton (2004) and Huckin (2004), I looked for thematic patterns as they reflected different contexts and meanings.

In the context of classroom instruction, I focused on the instructor's oral communication to understand his projected attitude towards the students. Depending on the students' perspective, his classroom comments could appear to be both inclusive and inviting or be seen to create a division among students. How did he address the students? What repeated words or phrases did he use to include and accept them as newcomers in this community? Conversely, what words or phrases could have been interpreted as limiting students' potential membership? How did the words' meanings change based on the context of his comments? Theoretically, students' perspectives on whether they felt

included or not may have influenced their willingness to incorporate the instructor's feedback into their writing.

I also read his written feedback on student essays. Written feedback itself brings additional complications. Often, written comments are misunderstood, even by competent students in a well taught classroom (Sperling & Freedman, 1987). This misunderstanding can be influenced by context, which gives rise to the question of how students make sense of the instructor's expectations and how they apply that interpretation to their writing. I analyzed focal student essays for changes or patterns in instructional feedback and how students responded to these in successive essays written during this quarter. In the written comments and corrections, how was the instructor providing a way for students to learn about college writing? What words, phrases, and terms did he use and did the meaning change from one essay to the next? Did the students respond to the instructor's written feedback and how was that evidenced in their writing? Did they incorporate his suggestions, acting as potential members of the college community, or ignore them? If they ignored them, why might they have done so? I looked for patterns and repeated discourse that either offered or limited students' access to the instructor and to college writing.

Overall in Perspective #3, I was looking at what avenues toward college writing were made available to the students and how those avenues shaped and supported student entry into college writing. Did the instructor's feedback encourage and support them as

they learned a new way of writing, or not? Were there patterns of discourse in the feedback on successive essays that emerged? Did he use the same words and phrases in all focal student feedback or were the word choices and phrases different for different students? Through the words, phrases, concepts in his feedback: was he providing access to students that allowed them to learn and participate in this group? How did he shape relationships with the students? How did he enable or inhibit student participation? In sum, how did he legitimize students as potential members of SW University, this classroom, and the college writing community?

#### “Becoming College Writers”

In the final stages of analysis of student writing, I wanted to know how my focal students felt about themselves as college writers and how this might have been reflected in the writing quality of their essays. Did the quality of their essays improve throughout the quarter, in accordance with the instructor’s expectations and the students’ interpretations of his feedback? Or was there a decline in quality, and why? Did they consider themselves to be functioning participants, on the periphery, or completely outside the college writing community (Gee, 2000-2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991)?

Using all of my data, I looked for reoccurring patterns in their comments regarding their background, cultural, and social upbringing that would indicate differences or similarities across all of my focal students’ experiences. What kinds of family expectations were there regarding educational pursuits? How did the students

respond to these expectations? In sum, how did their individual cultural and social upbringing appear to encourage or inhibit their entry into college writing?

### A Final Comment on Analysis

As I analyzed the data, I looked for actions, discourse, themes, or writing that stood out in some way, or “rich points”(Agar, 1996). These were discoveries that did not match my initial assumptions about how the classroom world worked or how legitimacy was granted as it pertained to students situating themselves within the college writing community. I took all of my collected data and laid them side by side in an attempt to identify patterns or similarities. In this way, I pulled from multiple sources and looked for commonalities or contradictions that would lead to a better understanding, and therefore possibly a different interpretation, of how the world surrounding the participants made sense to them. I found my data collection and analysis to be recursive as one continuously informed the other. As new knowledge and understanding came to light, I modified and adjusted my interpretations accordingly. In summary, I compared all focal students across all areas of analysis in order to identify similarities or differences as they attempted to enter the college writing community.

This analysis has brought to the surface an overall picture of the elements in a classroom community and how its participants shape it and in turn are shaped themselves. It also gives another way of looking at and talking about how access to a new community

is granted or limited based on the legitimacy granted by the instructor and consequently a clearer picture of my focal students emerge in light of their classroom experiences.

### **Concluding Remarks**

According to Erickson (1986), social organizations have “abstract universals” (p.130), concepts and practices that apply across many contexts, as well as “concrete universals” (p.130), concepts that are contextually restricted. One of the goals of interpretive research is to discover these concrete universals through study of a specific case in a specific setting and then comparing it to other closely examined case studies. While there is the assumption that some practices in teaching as well as student interactions in classrooms generalize to other classrooms, other practices and interactions are more contextually bound. It is the task of the researcher to discern the difference by attending to the specifics and concrete details of a particular situation (Erickson, 1986). Interpretive research can provide insight into classroom practice, so while the focus of my research was the experience of particular students in a particular context, the findings may provide educators another way of thinking about the transition experience from one writing community to another and why it remains difficult for some, but not for others.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Freshman Composition 1 – A Community of Practice**

The classroom is a community characterized by particular norms, routines, and student/teacher interactions. Numerous studies have sought to clarify what goes on in the classroom, and have focused primarily on instructional discourse and delivery of content (Cazden et al., 1972; Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997), teacher expectations as they influence learning (Bartholomae, 1985; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; McCarthy, 1987), and how teachers position themselves as to their role in the classroom and consequential student reactions (Yoon, 2008). Studies have found that, traditionally, teachers stand in front of the classroom as the authority, teacher talk dominates the discourse, and students are passive recipients of the delivered content. Less traditionally, other studies (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Nystrand, 1997; Sperling, 1990; Sperling & Woodlief, 1997) found classes where teacher and student roles reversed and rather than teachers transmitting information and students receiving and repeating said information, the curriculum was negotiated jointly as the teacher and student worked together and ultimately, the students were the ones to explain the main points of the lesson. While these research studies focused on classroom instruction and social interaction within the classroom, my study took on an additional perspective, focusing primarily on the avenues of access students were granted in their journey to join the college freshmen writing



community. While my case study classroom of Freshman Composition 1 did not differ significantly from the traditional classroom as others have described it, there was a contemporary element in my classroom involving the use of technology and a casual atmosphere as expectations were laid out with some subsequently breached. Additionally, I was able to show how Dr. Jackson offered avenues of access to students via different “voices,” representing the university, the caring counselor, and fellow student. How all this played out in the classroom and in Dr. Jackson’s discourse and written comments on students’ papers are discussed in this chapter.

The underlying premise of this study is that learning is a social endeavor and that, as such, it depends upon social interaction (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). As incoming college freshmen, students have to navigate their way through the writing community of the university. This process requires their participation in the rituals and behaviors that define this particular community, the use and recognition of acceptable repertoires, as well as the identification of expectations and challenges that all work together to define membership in this particular group (Wenger, 1998). Along with participation, legitimacy needs to be granted by both the current members or experts and the newcomers, to each other during this process. In the early stages of becoming a new member of a community, this relationship between the newcomer and the established member is vital as it sets the boundaries for levels of access. Based on my data, relative to the levels of legitimacy

gained and given, I would argue that without a measure of legitimacy being conferred both ways, the process of joining of a new community can be stymied.

While separating aspects of participation from one another can be artificial and there is significant overlap among them, to provide a way of talking about them, I discuss six themes suggested by theory that are related to the students' journey of joining this new community: Repertoires, Routines, Participation, Expectations, Challenges, and Legitimacy. Repertoires represent the resources used for participation and meaning making in a particular community that are created over time. In a classroom, these may include any technology used, text books, handouts from the instructor, as well as any "concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Routines are then the repeated practices that surface when using the established repertoires (Wenger, 1998). These elements do not gain meaning in and of themselves, but from the fact that they belong to this particular community. Participation involves the level of engagement or non-engagement in the particular routines that emerge over time in the classroom. Expectations of the university, instructor and students are those explicit and implicit anticipated outcomes, which are sometimes at cross purposes as each entity brings something different to the situation (Durst, 1999; Heath, 1983; Sommers & Saltz, 2004) and the Challenges emerge when students leave the familiarity of what they've know in previous settings and try to adjust and accommodate to the expectations of this new

context. The final theme, Legitimacy, has to do with recognition by the instructor as to the students' potential to become members of the college writing community and the level of authority granted by the students to the instructor. All six of these themes are viewed through interviews, classroom observations and documents. The next section of this chapter looks at these themes surrounding a community of practice and the factors that in my study contributed to the ability, or alternatively, the inability, of students to successfully navigate them.

### **Day One**

On the first day of class, many students wandered around campus looking for their first class, as did I. The outside temperature was 93 degrees, in the shade, at 1:45 pm on September 23, 2011. A flow of students entered a two-story brick building while glancing at a slip of paper in their hands to confirm the room number. Students littered the hallway, sitting with their backs against the wall, laptops open on their legs with backpacks used as armrests. Several others stood up while chatting on their phones or listening to their iPods, which I surmised helped them from having to make conversation with someone they didn't know. As I entered the hall, I attempted to make eye contact with any of the students, but all were preoccupied with their phones, laptops, iPods or fellow students. I went to the door and tried the handle. Locked. At that moment, a student approached me and asked if I was the instructor. I assured him I was not, and found myself an available wall space so I could lean and wait as well. Five minutes later

and twenty minutes prior to class start time, a man arrived, unlocked the door, propped it open, and walked away. Students extracted themselves from their waiting positions. Gathering all their bags, computers, and various ears plugs attached to thin multicolored wires, they filed into the classroom, silently choosing a seat. Some students lifted their heads in a silent greeting as they acknowledged one another. The air smelled of used chalk and dusty window sills and was filled with the sound of desks sliding across the tiled floor as students shuffled them around to either draw closer or farther away from the student in an adjacent desk. Many noisily dropped their backpacks to the floor. Several students hesitated in the front of the class, seeming to making a quick evaluation of who was sitting where and what seats were available. “Anyone sitting here?” was asked and answered with “No, go ahead.” Overall, the conversation was minimal and the atmosphere palpable with expectations and anxiety for the first day of class. I threaded my way to the back corner of the room, found a seat and positioned myself with notebook, recording pen, and glasses. Settled in for my first classroom observation, my research began.

The classroom walls were blank with no posters, advertisements or pictures anywhere, only beige paint with an occasional smudge of dirt. From my position in the back left corner of the room, a 15 foot chalkboard filled the left wall, a ten foot chalkboard covered the front, and a drop-down screen hung, currently rolled up, from the ceiling. The chairs were arranged neatly into rows of five across by five deep. With me,

four students were twenty minutes early. They sat in silence, one with a laptop opened to Facebook, another flipping through a shiny covered text book. Over the next 10 minutes, students trickled in. Some brandished their class schedules, attempting to confirm whether they were in the right room or not and either took a seat, or seemingly embarrassed, simply excused themselves. The front seats were taken quickly and the rest filled in as students entered the class. Out of the 25 seats, 23 were full at the start of class. The instructor, Dr. Jackson, arrived, began to work with the computer, and lowered the screen. As common in a traditional classroom setting, all whispered conversations among the students ceased at the arrival of the instructor. Turning in their seats to face forward, some held pens poised above their notebooks, some twirled their pencils within their fingers, while still others shuffled through papers. The students appeared to be Hispanic, Asian, Indian, and Caucasian. They all faced forward and waited for their Freshman Composition experience to begin.

### **A Shared Repertoire**

Part of the process of becoming a member in a new community is the development of a “shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). As mentioned before, this may include but is not limited to mutual resources such as textbooks or additional materials handed out by the instructor as well as what students bring with them to class. As in any classroom setting, a repertoire began to surface in this one. Each class session, as students sat down in the classroom, almost always in the same seat, they pulled out a

variety of devices, either to supplement the classroom instruction or enable them to pass the time. On the first day of class, iPods, cell phones, laptops and even a deck of cards appeared from multicolored backpacks. Throughout the quarter, water bottles, Star Bucks cups, and skateboards also began to appear regularly. During class time, anywhere from one to eight laptops were open on student desks. Some students were looking at the online version of the textbook, yet from where I sat, I could see students checking Facebook, emails, shopping sites, and Google maps, evidence that this classroom incorporated elements of contemporary educational – and other -- tools, and as the appropriate use of these tools was never challenged, the general technological scene added to the casual atmosphere and sometimes casual (even loose) accountability towards expectations of behavior, which is discussed in following sections. Other technology that was used in class included the “Blackboard” site on the Internet that posted notes from the instructor, assignments, and the class syllabus, as well as the “MyWork” site for the university where students had to post final copies of their essays to confirm the originality of their work.

While there are actual physical artifacts that make up the repertoire in a classroom such as those mentioned above, part of the developed repertoire can also include the way things are done, routines that surface regularly. Over the course of the quarter, certain routines became evident as acceptable behaviors in Freshman Composition 1.

## **Routines**

On the very first day of class, like a typical first day, students filed in quietly and chose a seat, some in the front row, some in the back and the rest scattered throughout the middle. Twenty-three students sat at their desks, silently glancing at each other. There was little conversation and the students remained silent as the instructor took a traditional position in front of the room, greeted the class and began to explain the class expectations. As part of the contemporary experience in a 2013 college classroom, several students had laptops open and appeared to be taking notes as he talked. In a more traditional mode, others wrote in notebooks and copied down the homework assignment that he put on the board. Still not a word was spoken. Dr. Jackson proceeded to outline the requirements of the class to a silent crowd.

## **Classroom behaviors**

Every session started the same way. In the beginning of the quarter, several students arrived 10 - 15 minutes prior to the start of class. Laptops were opened to a variety of social networks, email, or shopping sites. The students would chat quietly, but as soon as the instructor arrived, they stopped. Dr. Jackson would come in without saying a word, put his satchel and any books he carried on the table up front, adjust the computer and lower the screen (if needed) and then turn toward the class and give his welcome. During this set-up, the students turned to face the front of the room, removed their iPod earphones, opened their laptops, notebooks, and/or their textbooks. This appearance of

undivided attention to the instructor was a behavior in which all engaged, and yet, at least some of this behavior may have only been a ruse as, during class, student attention was often divided between the instructor and Internet surfing. Occasionally, a variety of websites remained opened throughout the entire class as students alternatively listened to the instructor and shopped on the web. Emails were read and answered, Facebook posts created, and internet searches conducted. It is possible that some students were reading their textbook online, but the laptops I could see from my seat did not appear to be focused on classroom activities. As time went on and students were never challenged on this behavior, more laptops appeared in class and by the end of the quarter, at least eight students consistently used their computers in class, often for purposes other than classroom activities. However, as long as attention *appeared* to be focused on the front of the room, there was no confrontation from the instructor and this behavior became routine as the quarter progressed.

#### Punctuality and Attendance

Arrival time and attendance constituted another type of routine in this particular classroom. The first day, four students arrived 20 minutes prior to the start of the 2:10 class. Students trickled in a few at a time from 1:50 to 2:10. At 2:09, Dr. Jackson arrived and began his routine of setting his books down, lowering or raising the screen, and making adjustments on the computer all before turning to greet the students. A few students were late, not an unexpected event the first day as students attempted to decipher



their schedules. As the quarter progressed, punctuality relaxed. Students began to arrive at 2:09, just as Dr. Jackson started to address the class. By October 10, the eighth session, at 2:05 only 15 students had arrived and even Dr. Jackson was late for this session. At 11 minutes into class, one student arrived and then 15 minutes into class, another student arrived. Upon arrival, both walked in front of the instructor and found their seats with neither an apology nor explanation. The instructor did not interrupt his presentation to ask for one. On other days, students arrived 15 – 20 minutes into the class and on one occasion, a student left 20 minutes prior to the end of class. Not once was any student, as far as I knew, reprimanded for either coming late or leaving early.

Attendance fluctuated as well, going from 23 on the first day to anywhere from 13 - 22 during subsequent class sessions throughout the quarter. One of my focal students missed three classes in a row while another, non-focal, student withdrew completely. A section in the syllabus handed out the first day of class addressed late arrivals and early departures as being “disruptive” and “creating a poor impression,” but there was no grade consequence mentioned and accountability appeared to be minimal. In high school, bells typically signal when to switch classes and when to make sure students are in their seats; in some schools there is even a 60-second warning bell for those lingering in the hallways. With the absence of these regulatory bells, the college freshmen’s attitudes and behaviors appeared to adapt accordingly. Showing up late, leaving early, sitting in the front row or against the back wall, all were part of negotiating acceptable behaviors in

this class. With the breaching of common school-like behaviors of coming in on time, staying for the entire class, and attending every class session, the casual atmosphere and loose accountability towards certain behaviors of this class were fostered as it appeared that it was no longer an expectation that students strictly adhered to the traditional boundaries surrounding the educational setting.

### Clothing

Typical dress is another characteristic that defines a community (Gee, 1992; Wenger, 1998). Ripped blue jeans and lace tops with a camisole underneath was typical attire for most of the girls; however, some girls wore summer dresses with leggings underneath, and still others wore shorts that would have constituted a flagrant dress code violation in most high schools. White t-shirts emblazoned with advertisements for power bars, popular athletic shoes, or favorite restaurants accompanied by sagging pants seemed to be acceptable for the boys. One female student in particular wore oversized earrings, a chain running from one pocket to another, lace gloves with fingers cut out, and multicolored tennis shoes. When I complimented her choice of earrings, she leaned back and told me that before college she had gone to a private school that required uniforms. She was thrilled to be able to wear whatever she wanted and planned on exploiting the opportunity to be creative in her choices. Most were casually and apparently comfortably dressed and didn't seem overly concerned with what others wore. With such a variety of outfits in this class, clearly, the students were following the minimal dress code and to

dress like a college freshman in contemporary terms meant a certain amount of freedom of expression.

### Classroom Instruction

In a traditional manner, the primary type of instruction in this class was with the instructor in front of the room, students seated and listening with various apparent levels of engagement, with textbooks, notebooks, or laptops open on the desktops. In the beginning of the quarter, when Dr. Jackson would ask a general question, students did not raise their hands, but instead looked at each other without saying anything. After he asked for a quiz the students had taken in class to be “sent up,” a student had raised his hand and asked, “What if you’re not finished?” Dr. Jackson’s answer was, “Not finished? Gotta quit. Turn it in anyway. That’s what happens with those deadlines.” It was clearly “his” classroom and although he spoke casually and in friendly manner to the student, he was still the authority. As the quarter progressed, when he would ask questions, one or two students would respond out loud without raising his/her hand and Dr. Jackson would acknowledge their response with a “that’s right” and continue with his lecture. Several times throughout the quarter, a student would raise a hand and ask a question and Dr. Jackson would answer, but generally, the practice was the traditional instructor up front talking most of the time.

When Dr. Jackson was not lecturing, group work was a consistent instructional routine in Freshman Composition 1 and, throughout the quarter, the class worked in

groups seven different times. Dr Jackson introduced the group concept by saying, “This is something we always do in writing classes...and every week or so we are going to break up into our discussion groups.” The groups had been set up before hand by Dr. Jackson based on students’ initial writing piece on the first day of class. The tasks varied. Sometimes the group would look for particular characteristics of writing such as uncovering story elements from a narrative that was in their textbook or finding transition words in a particular story in their textbooks that they had been discussing in class. They also talked about their essay drafts, or brainstormed ideas for an upcoming essay. Three times, instead of meeting in the prearranged groups, Dr. Jackson divided the class by rows or partners so students could look at a specific passage in order to summarize it for the class. Although this was a practice that, according to Dr. Jackson, was the norm in Freshmen Composition classes, he did not always see the value of group work and sometimes gave them a choice whether to work with a partner or alone. When I questioned Dr. Jackson in one of our interviews about his use of group work and peer review, he answered:

Frankly, I’m not real impressed with the results so far. I’ve been trying for years to try to get group work productive and I feel like I have to do some of it because they need to talk and they need to talk to each other. And some of the ones who will never talk in class, at least they’ll talk in groups a little bit and so I think that it’s a valuable experience for them to try and translate their writing into verbal language...But I don’t do it that much just because I’m not that impressed with the results.

During the third week of class, groups met for the first time. As students rearranged the desks into groups, the conversation was halting and appeared a bit uncomfortable. Students looked at each other, some laughed uncomfortably, and one student protested, “I didn’t say I would start!” as everyone looked at her. However, once they started sharing, the conversation flowed. There was an apparent feeling of relief as they began to talk, leaning forward to hear one another, laughing occasionally, and gesturing with their hands. In one circle, a student took charge by asking “Who’s going to start?” The four students in the group looked at each other and then the initial speaker decided in what order they would speak as she drew an imaginary counter clockwise circle. They all agreed to that speaking order and one student began the discussion. In another group, the conversation was as follows¹:

S1 : So...ummm...do we have to READ our essays to you guys or are just tell you guys what we wrote about?

S2: I think we just read the draft.

S3: [...just tell about]. Oh, we read it?

S2: Yea. And then we can give feedback on what they did.

S4: Do you guys have quotes in yours?

S1: Quotes?

S4: Yea. How do you cite, like a website?

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¹ See Appendix B for transcription conventions

S3: I didn't do my works cited yet so I just...

S2: He told us...

S4: When you put the quote in, what do you do?

S3: Like right here...like I didn't do my works cited yet, I just put that right now (*lifting up his paper and pointing to a particular place*) but once I do my works cited, I'll ask him.

In other groups the conversation included comments such as, "Do you know what to write about?" answered by another student, "I have no idea what to write about." Or, after Dr. Jackson went over their tasks, a student comment of "What are we doing?" was answered by another student with "I didn't read the story that much." As I walked around the room observing, not all groups were focused on the task at hand, and one group was talking about a taste test they had had to take in a different class and, as one student explained it to another, he said, "You are blindfolded and they all taste like crap." The conversations continued as the students asked questions of each other, clarified the instructor's directions, and tried to make sense of the class expectations. I saw all of this as part of the process of participating in this writing community as the students questioned, responded, and revised their views and opinions based on conversations and the interpretation of those conversations.

### Office Hours

Another routine that appeared to help define this community had to do with Dr. Jackson's offering his office hours and time to discuss problems with student essays or misunderstandings in reference to classroom materials. Starting on the first day of class, Dr. Jackson went over the syllabus and talked about his office hours, "MW 3:30 – 5:00 and by appointment," and his contact information, which included the location of his office, his phone number, and his email address. Four different times during the quarter, he specifically invited students to his office. Sometimes he included an invitation in his written feedback on students' essays. He reiterated the time and location of his availability and encouraged them to bring in their drafts to work on editing and grammar if they needed to, or ideas for essays. "I will be in my office, so if anyone has questions, come on by," was his final comment on the last day of class before the final.

In our final interview, I asked about office visits. He said:

I had some very conscientious students. I had three or four conscientious students who came in and saw me regularly in my office hours and brought drafts, and in some cases repeated...in various stages of revision and so that was good and then I had kind of the back row who...Yeah. Didn't see much of them. Had problems with late assignments and absenteeism and stuff like that.

While Dr. Jackson's invitation might have served as a path toward joining this community of writers, it was typically not very successful as, according to Dr. Jackson, so few students took advantage of the opportunity. While his invitation to visit was a

routine in the classroom, either verbal or written, it did not appear to be a student routine to take him up on it.

### In Summary

After ten weeks of observation, I had a good idea of the typical freshman student in this traditional yet contemporary classroom setting. Comfortably dressed in casual clothes, often encumbered by laptop, iPad, cell phone, skateboard, and snacks, freshmen students spent time situating themselves in the classroom environment through interacting with their peers or, conversely, staying quiet. This class appeared to be familiar with “doing school” as they all came in, found a seat, and faced forward when the instructor entered the room. Most of them were aware of the time constraints of the classes and most were in their seats on time, yet some still pushed the limits, with no visible consequence. Audible conversation was minimal, if non-existent, during the instructor’s lectures unless students were sitting in the back row, and even then the whispering was infrequent. However, communication via technology between each other and with others outside of the classroom took place continually as students had laptops and cell phones out, all functioning on a regular basis, often simultaneously.

In some ways, the structure of the class was not unlike that of a high school class. The instructor laid out his expectations, gave assignments for both inside and outside class time, and expected students to attend class and complete the work. The difference was that students themselves were accountable for their behavior. If they needed help,



they needed to seek it. The instructor made himself available with regular office hours, but there would be no phone calls home from him.

Students establish common frames of reference, either explicitly or implicitly, in terms of dress, conversation, and classroom behavior. These norms are established through a give and take between the instructor and students as his responses or non-responses are interpreted and acted upon (Nystrand, 1986). All of these negotiations make up a college freshman. For some, the entrance into this new community would appear to be seamless; for others, it would prove difficult.

### **Participation**

For the purposes of this study, when I talk about participation of the students, I draw upon Wenger's (1998) use of the term "to describe the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (p. 54). I observed these students for ten weeks in the classroom environment and found that their "social experience" was primarily one of traditional schooling behaviors and their "active involvement" included participation in typical classroom behavior as they came to class, talked until the instructor arrived then faced front, took notes, completed quizzes, wrote essays, and interacted on a minimal basis in group discussions. In the beginning of the quarter, Dr. Jackson would ask a general question pertaining to his lecture and when there was no response other than students glancing at each other, he would answer it himself. As the quarter went on, three or four students

would respond chorally without raising their hands when he would ask a question, such as “What is a prepositional phrase?” or “Why do you think the author wrote it that way?” Or if a student raised her hand, he would call on her with a nod of his head, in that way giving permission to answer. And near the end of the quarter, he would ask questions specifically of individual students by calling their name. When he was explaining a new concept, a student would sometimes raise his or her hand for clarification. However, the primary mode of instruction was Dr. Jackson delivering the content and students silently listening. In the process of this kind of participation, practices were negotiated, interpreted, and responded to either through students’ willingness or reluctance to speak. This was their form of participation and contributed to the make-up of the community as a whole.

As the quarter progressed and students appeared to become more comfortable in this community, all were participating at some level as soon as they arrived in the classroom and sat down. Some talked with their neighbor, some texted on their phone, some immediately opened their laptop. During class or group discussions, students either engaged in conversations about the topic in class or discussed issues beyond the classroom walls, such as the one that follows. Prior to the starting of class, students were talking about an instructor from a different class and expressing frustration as the feeling was he was not preparing students for tests.

S1: You're not going to learn anything, like literally, don't even try. You won't learn anything about Egypt. He'll talk about himself, he'll talk about current events, which is cool and all, but you're not learning 'shit' about your text book. Like, about what you're supposed to learn, like what's going to be on the test.

S2: Right.

S1: Current events do matter, but...

S2: They do matter...

S1: They do matter, but...you don't...and you're not teaching us what's on the test...you can pretty much study on your own anyways.

S2: Yeah, we have a TA, but my TA sucks.

Another student who appeared to be listening but not participating orally in this conversation was checking out the "Rate your Teacher" website on her computer. It wasn't clear which teacher she was rating, but when the score came up and she told other students it was 3.2 out of 5, and one student remarked:

S3: How was he rated that high?

S4: Well, obviously, you can sleep in his class. Maybe that's why he got rated so high.

S3: He's a chill guy, but he can't teach. I guess that's why he's rated high cuz that's how chill he is, but he's retarded at teaching and giving tests.

This short bit of conversation evidenced a lack of recognition and status of the said instructor as the authority in the classroom. It was not clear if the student was speaking from experience or hearsay, but this type of discussion among students may have served to unite them with each other in the shared knowledge that not all teachers will be granted legitimacy by their students. The sharing of these sentiments may have also functioned to establish a norm in this classroom community, that dissatisfaction with an instructor is not unexpected. These types of negotiations, a give and take, all contribute to the making up of this particular community and the characteristics of its members.

At other times prior to the beginning of the class, the conversation turned to current movies, Paranormal Activity, labs in other classes, complaints about classes being too long and too early as they would rather sleep in. However, when Dr. Jackson entered the room, these conversations ceased. Their behaviors in class and conversations, discussed in the previous section, all served to construct the practices within this community of learners, in turn shaping the students as particular participants themselves.

There were various levels of participation in the classroom practices. Some appeared to listen while taking notes and flipping through their textbooks. Yet others, who also appeared to be engaged with the classroom content with their laptops open,

were instead actually shopping the web or checking Googlemaps. And while still others, without open notebooks or laptops, seemed also to be listening, it is possible they were mentally someplace else. On some days, students responded to Dr. Jackson's specific questions; some days they were silent. Most of their "participation" was comprised of sitting silently while he lectured and wrote on the chalkboard. As the quarter progressed, students came to class unprepared with their drafts, or swore under their breaths when a quiz was announced on the reading from the class before. Occasionally, students slept at their desks, their heads bobbing up and down until they were finally still, resting on the desktop. Conversations sometimes took place during Dr. Jackson's lectures, or a student looked out the window, crumpling a water bottle against the back of his neck. While the majority of the students appeared to be paying attention, these other classroom behaviors could be observed during each session. As none of these behaviors was significantly disruptive, Dr Jackson appeared to accept this variety of behaviors as he carried on from the front to the classroom without interrupting his routine to confront or question students about their activities during class. In addition to what went on inside the classroom itself, participation or non-participation also took place outside the classroom walls.

One of the routines established in class was the availability of Dr. Jackson during office hours. His implied expectations appeared to be that students would take advantage of this opportunity and it was something that would help them as they entered this new writing community. As he mentioned in an interview, three or four students visited Dr.

Jackson in his office for help with essays, yet the majority of students chose not to participate in that particular practice.

For some of these students, participation in Freshman Composition 1 was undoubtedly complicated by their membership in multiple communities of practice. While it is possible – and unavoidable -- to participate in multiple communities of practice at the same time (Wenger, 1998), it can be difficult. Problems occur when the demands of membership in different communities create conflicts with each other. Because each community focuses on their own pursuits, it is sometimes difficult to go back and forth between the two. This multiple membership requires participation between different communities, often negating full participation in either. Because I did not interview all of the students, I cannot say how many struggled with this issue; however, two of my focal students had to struggle with balancing membership in multiple communities, and those issues specific to them are discussed in the following chapters.

Also, and importantly, students' participation or non-participation in the established practices and routines in Freshman Composition 1 reflected their own interpretation of Dr. Jackson's expectations, invitations, and legitimacy as an instructor. The responses to the routines and expectations and therefore consequent levels of participation by my focal students are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 – 7. Where Kevin and Becky participated fully in the expectations of this class, Dona participated in a limited manner, and Mark appeared to be almost a non-participant in this community.

How these levels of participation either fostered or limited their entrance to the college writing community is also discussed in these following chapters.

### **Expectations**

#### **The University**

According to the University's Introduction to College Composition Program manual, the goal of a Freshman Composition class is to prepare students "to investigate, organize and understand themselves and their world," and to become writers who know how to think about, analyze, and consequently produce a variety of written compositions. In the *Introduction to College Composition Program Manual of 2011-2012*, Freshman Composition 1, 2 and 3 were to be an introduction to college level writing, teaching a variety of essay genres, as well as important reading and writing strategies in order to provide a broad education in literacy. This program was referred to in the manual as "the cornerstone of a liberal arts education" and was designed to teach skills that would enable future success in college as well as beyond in students' personal and future working lives. These objectives were reinforced through selected readings, class discussions, outside research, and student produced papers. Upon completion of these three classes, students, ideally, were to be equipped to approach any type of written assignment they might face in subsequent classes throughout their university experiences.

## Freshman Composition 1

More specifically, expectations for Freshman Composition 1, where my research was conducted, were outlined in the Introduction to College Composition Program manual:

Freshman Composition 1 teaches students:

- to read critically and think analytically;
- to read and write with rhetorical awareness of the particular writing situation's audience, purpose, and genre conventions;
- to use the complete composing process recursively, including invention, planning, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing;
- to do research (including memory search, field research, library and Internet research) and to document sources; and
- to become metacognitive (critically aware of their own thinking and writing processes).

(from Introduction to College Composition Program Policies)

While these goals define a theoretically sophisticated and rigorous course, theory can be one thing and what takes place in the classroom another. It became clear to me throughout the quarter that these goals did not align directly with those of the students and were ultimately more far-reaching than even those of the instructor, a discrepancy that shaped this freshman writing community in specific ways particular to the participants themselves.



Dr. Jackson

During that first day of class, Dr. Jackson carefully outlined his requirements for the class, going over the textbook, outside reading materials, and the syllabus. The Course Description covered in the syllabus was as follows:

A more rigorous and sophisticated standard of reading comprehension and written communication is required of you now as members of the University community than perhaps has been required of you in the past. We want to give you more experience in meeting this standard by having you read published (and critically acclaimed) texts, think about them, discuss them, and most importantly write in response to them.

From the beginning, Dr. Jackson explained that students were going to be looking at and producing writing using a variety of strategies in various formats as this was the kind of writing they would be doing throughout their University experience. For this class, he expected five essays of 750-1250 words each, which translated to three to five pages each. He said that he would put the homework assignment on the board every session and that he expected students to come to class with completed homework in hand. He then asked the students for a writing sample in the form of a letter of introduction and outlined specifically what questions he wanted answered. Students extracted notebooks and pens or pencils from their backpacks and began to write. No questions for clarification were asked and silence prevailed. At the end of the first day, Dr. Jackson answered what he called “the question every student wants to ask,” of “How do I get an A in this class?” Again, he had a specific answer. He said he looked for evidence of

reading comprehension, unity within the paper, detailed development with specific support, writing coherence and flow in a clear and logical fashion, as well as standard usage of grammar and sentence structure.

In Freshman Composition 1, the list of expectations in the syllabus was not unusual. Students were required to buy certain texts, complete assignments on time in MLA format, and avoid plagiarism. In reference to being late or leaving early, the syllabus said both “are always disruptive,” and “cell phones, MP3 players, etc. can be a nuisance...please turn them off.” The final expectation was about being prepared for class and, as much of the work is done during class, when students come unprepared, “you place a burden of inconvenience on your group and ...create a poor impression that will unavoidably affect your final grade...” There was no section outlining an attendance policy. Dr. Jackson made his expectations clear, not only with regard to participation but also with regard to writing. Each time a new genre was introduced, he spent time going over examples of what he was looking for, listed on the board what was included, and gave students a handout that included a specific prompt with directions to consult their textbook, *Elements of Writing*.

A few weeks after the start of class, I had a chance to talk with Dr. Jackson about his expectations for the class. He outlined his bottom line goals for his students.

For this class, Freshman Composition 1, I'd like them to be able to be competent at the basic expository tasks: narrate something, describe something, define something, compare contrast some things, explain some things... There needs to be that unity. They need to be able to recognize what a main idea and a thesis is...

to be able to recognize how supporting ideas connect with that thesis. They need to be able to recognize coherence, the difference between ideas that unfold and those that don't...to recognize things like digressions and repetitions... they need to be able to move back and forth between the abstract and the concrete specifically in their writing.

He continued to explain that while other instructors may have “more grandiose ambitions about self discovery and self understanding...I am concerned with their cognitive skills, their communication skills...” He said he tried to prepare the students to do the basic tasks other instructors in other classes are going to expect them to do. These goals, while generally encompassing the ideas put forth in the Writing Program manual for teachers and those of his own syllabus, seemed to reflect Dr. Jackson's 17 years of experience teaching Freshman Composition 1 and were more practical in nature than those outlined in the manual. He was more concerned with the manipulation of language and the recognition of the coherence and rhetorical moves of a written piece than with students becoming critical thinkers in society and metacognitive about their own reading and writing skills.

I also questioned Dr. Jackson, as he was a veteran instructor of Freshman Composition 1, about his overall expectations, based on his experience, for freshman students in terms of success. In his answer, his word choice indicated a particular value system, appearing to privilege one type of student over another, comparing those students who already understood, “bright, solid, competent,” to those who figured things out part way through the class and had a “breakthrough,” to those who didn't get it, not even

using a word to describe them, but instead allowing his voice to fade away without qualifying that group of students. Continuing on in the interview, Dr. Jackson equated the “conscientious” students with those who came to seek his help in his office multiple times with multiple revisions, compared to those “in the back row” whom he “didn’t see much.” They were identified as those who had problems with “late assignments and absenteeism and stuff like that.”

R: What about successes? Over the years, typically, do you see a lot of growth in their writing over the quarter or they leave the quarter competent or...

J: I do. Yeah, we do see that. Not as much as we’d like to. You know, we do see a lot of students go out the door writing and reading the same way they did when they came in but you do have those students who really pick up on it. I would say it’s a group...I’d say it’s a group of 4, 5 or 6 in a typical class who may have a breakthrough and say, ‘Oh ok, that’s how it works’...You’ve got the bright students who are already very solid and competent and you’ll have 3 or 4 of those.

R: Right.

J: And then you’ll have 4 or 5 who’ll have a breakthrough in the class but that still leaves about half of them who are still...

At the end of the quarter, we talked about this particular group of students, the ones who experience a breakthrough during the quarter.

I had some very conscientious students. I had three or four conscientious students who came in and saw me regularly in my office hours and brought drafts, and in some cases repeated...in various stages of revision and so that was good and then I had kind of the back row who... Yeah. Didn't see much of them. Had problems with late assignments and absenteeism and stuff like that.

It is interesting to note how the routine of roles in the classroom was maintained by both the "bright and conscientious students," meaning those who sought his help, and by the almost proverbial "back row who...yeah," perpetuated the role of those didn't succeed. These roles, while appearing to be typical in a classroom, reified the expectations and participation levels for both the students and Dr. Jackson, throughout the rest of the quarter.

## **The Classroom**

### Classroom behaviors

While certain expectations were outlined by the University and Dr. Jackson, these were played out in various forms in the classroom, often discrepant with the formally stated expectations referenced in class. In the Freshman Composition 1 syllabus, there were written class policies in reference to seven areas: Academic Honesty (defining plagiarism and consequences of plagiarizing), Assignment Deadlines (and lowering of

grades if late), Assignment Formats (turning in hard copies and posting to MyWork), Late Arrivals (“disruptive and ...create a poor impression”), Early Departures (even more disruptive than late arrivals), Electronic Communications (needed to be turned off during class), and Coming Prepared (if not, “it created a poor impression that will unavoidably affect your final grade”). On the first day of class, Dr. Jackson referred to these expectations by asking the students to “please read them over,” and reminded them that “we hold them strictly.” As he did not address any of them specifically, he may have assumed that these policies were not anything new to students and that they would be followed. However, some of these policies did not play out so as to match the expectations stated in class. Some of the most overt discrepancies had to do with arrivals, departures, and electronics.

Throughout the quarter, out of the 31 scheduled class meetings, one or more students were late to 15 of them. Students were late from one minute to, in one case, 15 minutes. Often there were multiple late arrivals in one session, as students arrived at different times. At no time did Dr. Jackson acknowledge the late students, but instead continued on with his instruction. On one particular day, a student entered late while the class was taking a quiz. Dr. Jackson did not hand the student a quiz and neither did the student ask for one. It is not clear whether the student made up the quiz at a later date, or received a score of zero. While the syllabus emphasized being on time, and gave the admonition to the students that being late “created a bad impression,” there was no

obvious consequence for being late to class. The only reference made to punctuality after the first day was the one time Dr. Jackson was late. On that day, he apologized to the class, explaining that he had had to run some materials across campus and that was why he was late. That did not happen again. As to early departures, another “disruption” referred to in the syllabus, there was only one day when a student got up during class and explained that he to take a test for another class and that this was the only time it was offered. No other details were offered, and Dr. Jackson did not ask for any. The student left the room.

Since an attendance expectation was not specifically mentioned in the syllabus, it appeared that different students had different interpretations of expectations surrounding the routine of attending. Out of the 31 sessions, only on three of the days, were all 23 students present. Otherwise, there were between 16 and 22 students in each class, except for the session during Thanksgiving week, on November 23, when only 12 students attended. Again, Dr. Jackson made no comments or admonitions related to being in class other than in the syllabus where he wrote about “being prepared.” In this section, he wrote that much of the work in class was in a discussion or group workshop format, and if you were not prepared “you place a burden of inconvenience on your group and on the class as a whole...you once again create a poor impression that will unavoidably affect your final grade for the course.” This was written in the syllabus, but not discussed in class.

Another discrepancy arose with the use of technology in the classroom. In the syllabus, Dr. Jackson had written, “Needless to say, cell phones, MP3 players, etc. can be a nuisance in the classroom. Please turn them off with you are in class.” It is important to note that he did not mention laptop computers, possible his acknowledgement that the computer can be used as a supplement to classroom instruction downloading textbooks and taking notes. During the quarter, on any given day, from one to five laptops were open during class; however, from the ones I could see, as I indicated earlier in this chapter, most were not being used to supplement classroom instruction. Students used their laptops during class for shopping on the web, playing computer games, checking out future schedules at the university, and communicating through email or Facebook. At no time did Dr. Jackson question the use of the computers or ask that anyone put them away. As the quarter progressed, the number of laptops opened in class increased.

Cell phones were a different issue. The syllabus explicitly stated that they be turned off, but several times throughout the quarter, phones rang during class. When that happened, Dr. Jackson made no comment as the student turned it off. Texting, however, was done on a regular basis, with no reaction from the instructor. The first time I noticed students texting was one third of the way through the quarter, on October 28. It started with texting under the desks, and when there were no repercussions, cell phones eventually ended up on students’ desks, next to the laptops, and students typed and texted simultaneously in full view of Dr. Jackson. He did not ask students to put their phones



away and so the multi-tasking between computer and cell phones that took place during class time became an accepted routine in this particular classroom, in spite of the policies on the syllabus. This raises the issue as to the role of the syllabus in this community and the routines that were created due to implicit acceptance by Dr. Jackson of practices that ran counter to the syllabus's stated expectations.

### Instruction

In the syllabus and when introducing students to Freshman Composition 1 requirements on the first day, Dr. Jackson went over the types of reading and writing the students would be doing during the quarter. He talked in terms of the books they would read, the essays they would write, and the thinking they would be doing. He explained that the class size was small as it was “conducive to learning” and there would be discussions as well as group work during the quarter. As indicated earlier, he started them off with writing a “letter of introduction of themselves” to him and listed topics on the board that they were to address in their letter:

Official Name

Preferred Name

Course of Study

Last Writing Course

Most Difficult Writing Assignment

Last Book Read

## Favorite Book

As mentioned before, he also took the stance of a hypothetical student asking a question about getting an A, and he wrote on the board the five characteristics he looked for when grading papers:

To get an “A” in the class:

1. Reading Comprehension – show evidence that you understood the text
2. Unity – one main idea
3. Development – detailed and specific support
4. Coherence – unfolds/flows in a clear and logical way
5. Grammar and usage

This listing of expectations, helped to establish what he valued in student writing in this class, in turn shaping behaviors of students as they responded to Dr. Jackson as the instructor. Even the order of what was required could be interpreted as a value on aspects of writing, with Reading Comprehension coming first, and grammar coming last. It is interesting to note the amount of time Dr. Jackson spent on grammar during the quarter even though grammar was listed last, which may have implied it was least importance on the board, but not in instructional practice.

These criteria were consistent with what he mentioned in our first formal interview and remained so all quarter. With each explanation of a new essay genre, Dr.

Jackson reminded the students of these criteria. Even though he had listed five, he summarized them as the “Three Biggies: unity, coherence, and development.” It appeared he assumed that if students didn’t understand the readings, they would not be able to address the next three and so did not include reading comprehension as one of the “Three Biggies.” Neither did he include grammar and usage.

Overall, this was not an unexpected introduction to a freshman writing class. However, as the quarter progressed, the emphasis of his instruction seemed to veer away from the University’s stated expectation that students learn to “think critically and analytically,” as well as develop a “rhetorical awareness” and a certain level of “metacognition,” to instead focus on writing strategies, genres, grammar, and Standard English usage.

On September 28th, the third class session, Dr. Jackson reviewed the elements of a narrative, the genre for Essay #1. He referred the students the stories they had read the night before, *An American Childhood* by Annie Dillard and *When the Walls Come Tumbling Down* by Trey Ellis. Students reached in their backpacks and pulled out the book, opening it on their desks. He wrote on the board in three columns: Well Told Story, Effective Description, Indication of Significance. For some students, anything written on the board apparently denoted a level of importance for as soon as Dr. Jackson wrote on the board, they pulled out notebooks and seemingly began to copy whatever he wrote. He spent the next five minutes in class to list and talk about the author’s use of specific

details, prepositional phrases, and active verbs. Next he spent another five minutes and listed effective descriptive words from the readings (translucent, perfectly white, staggering, blinded) that “helped the reader visualize the event being described.” For the third column, significance, Dr. Jackson spent six minutes reviewing sections of the essays that reflected the significance of the described event. This time spent, over 15 minutes of class, served to set up his expectations for Essay #1 with the implied expectation that these were characteristics of college writing.

Next he told the students to turn to page 31 in their textbook and said, “You see something that might be familiar to you. You may have seen it before,” and he drew what he called a “pyramid” on the board and labeled it with the rhetorical components of a narrative: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution. At this point, several students who had not previously done so pulled out notebooks and paper and laid it across their open texts on their desks, and began to take notes. It is possible that students were drawing upon an expectation learned in high school and applying to this new community where when something was written on the board, it must be important. When he would ask a general question, a few students would call out an answer; otherwise he directed the discourse. He said, “When you tell a story you have to let your reader know when this is happening, where this is happening...you have to let them know what the setting is...they call that Exposition...” He talked through the components of a narrative using simple language, illustrations on the board, and a

continual review of the elements. He gave multiple examples from the stories they had read the night before to illustrate each element. His final comment was "...basic elements of a story. Your Essay #1 will have these... you'll have these...you'll have these cuz you gotta have them in order to tell a story." Then he went over each element again:

You are going to have to decide. How are you going to present that exposition? How are you going to set that up? You've got to present that rising action. That's where your well-told story is. You've got to present that climax and you gotta present that resolution. How are you going to end it all?

Dr Jackson referred to these as the "basic elements" needed in a narrative. There was no mention of the objectives outlined in the Composition Program handbook: analytical thinking, rhetorical awareness, or metacognition. He spent portions of six class sessions discussing and reviewing narrative structures.

The next essay Dr. Jackson introduced was a "Profile." As part of the instruction, he referred students to an essay in the classroom textbook, *The Last Stop* by Brian Cable, a profile of a mortuary. Students shuffled through their backpacks, pulling out their textbooks and notebooks apparently preparing to take notes. Reading a couple of different sections, he pointed out specific characteristics of this type of essay. First he drew attention to the organizational plan the author used, the "tour approach" where the author took the reader through the funeral home, room by room. Dr. Jackson pointed out how the author included specific descriptive details about each room as well as an interview with the funeral director, a "tall, skinny, pale man, kinda like a vulture." Dr.

Jackson read the paragraph where the author brought himself into the piece when he touched a dead body. Upon finishing his discussion of this piece, he emphasized the importance of having an “organizational plan,” and answering the “big question,” which was the perspective on the topic of the essay. Within this essay there were elements of seriousness, the topic of death, as well as elements of ironic contradiction as the author wrote about the “taboo” subject of death even though everyone eventually dies. Dr. Jackson talked the author’s use of an ironic and playful tone throughout. His final comment about *The Last Stop* was, “We are going to be looking for you to do something like this for Essay #2...looking at a coherent perspective that is again, a little bit beyond the pat...beyond the simplistic...a little more aware of the irony in situations.”

After his discussion of this essay, Dr. Jackson asked the students to read another essay, *I’m Not Leaving Until I Eat This Thing*, by John T. Edge, and look for the four elements they had just discussed and he wrote them on the board.

Reporting detailed information

Coherent Organizational Plan

Role for the Writer

Perspective on Topic (Dominant impression)

He gave them the option of either doing it by themselves, or with the person next to them and then he assigned one of the elements to each row of students and said, “We are going

to put you on the spot to identify particular examples.” As Dr. Jackson walked to the front of the room to glance at a stack of papers, students began to shuffle the desks around to either work with a partner or alone. During the five minutes allotted for this assignment, some students read silently, then discussed quietly with their neighbor. It was not clear whether the discussion was about the assignment or a different topic. One student had his book open, but was looking out the window. Another fought a losing battle with sleep as his head nodded forward. When it came time for students to present their findings, right before Mark, one of my focal students, was asked to report out, he walked to the front of the class and asked permission to visit the restroom, therefore withdrawing himself from any contribution to the discussion. As students reported their findings, others appeared to listen, while others flipped through their textbooks or wrote in their notebooks.

In his final comments about this essay, Dr. Jackson left the choice of what to profile up to the students, but he did reemphasize his expectations. He talked about the need to pick something of interest and to “bring yourself into it.” The final and “most important” element was “What does it all mean? What is the significance of it and what are we supposed to get out of it? You need to have some kind of perspective on your topic...a dominant impression.” The following three class sessions were devoted to discussion pertaining to this type of essay.

Dr. Jackson introduced Essay #3 as being “a little bit more complicated than Essay 2” as it required the explanation of a topic and the need for research and MLA

formatting, including a works cited page with at least two sources. He told students they had to use at least one “print” source, meaning the source didn’t appear on the internet, and with humor he said as an example, “There are these things called ‘books’ that used to not be on the internet...those are print sources.” Several students giggled in response. He asked if there were any questions and a couple of students shook their heads; otherwise there was no response. He said they would be “paraphrasing some of them, summarizing some of them and quoting from some of them, but we’ll talk about that next week.” He said they would cover how to use MLA format, and how to conduct research next week as well.

Going on, he referred students to their classroom textbook for examples of this type of essay where it gave instruction on how to “explain a concept,” the focus of Essay #3, and how to draft, outline, and revise this type of essay. The students had finished watching the movie *A River Runs Through It* in class the previous session, and he listed concepts taken from the movie on the board as examples: Sibling Rivalry, Ambivalence, Addictions, Compulsive behaviors. Next he had students look at a student essay in their textbooks about cannibalism as an example where the student had to do research to explain his topic. While he was talking, some students pulled out their textbooks and flipped through the pages to find the essay and some pulled out their phones and began texting. He talked about the need for an “approach” and “some strategies.” He listed on the board sample approaches of “biological, ethical, anthropological, and philosophical.” Next to this list, he wrote up possible strategies of “cause and effect” and “classification.”



During this lecture, students were engaged in various activities; some appeared to be related to the instruction, others not, such as texting or typing on their computers. One student had her opened textbook on her lap with her computer opened on her desk. Another student's head was on his textbook and his eyes were closed. In the back row, a whispered conversation took place. At one point, Dr. Jackson stopped writing on the board and asked a question about the essay on Cannibalism, "What happens...what happens four million years ago in West Africa?" After nine seconds of no response, he wrote the answer on the board. The next few questions received the same non-response with Dr. Jackson eventually providing the answer.

For the next four classes, Dr. Jackson continued to instruct students on how to construct Essay # 3, and students continued to participate on various levels. Each session had students in the front row, facing forward, apparently listening, and even asking the occasional question for clarity, while others remained connected to happenings outside the immediate room via computers and cell phones.

Essay #4 required the identification and exploration of a particular theme or concept from the novel *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer. These essays were to have "one focus...one idea initially as a unity." Dr. Jackson then told the students that how they wanted to approach this was up to them. They could write it in a style similar to a "profile" or "explaining a concept" or a combination of the two. They could use "narrative, process narrative, comparison and contrast, and all the stuff that we've been talking about." He emphasized the need to not confuse your reader, but to help them

“understand your concept more deeply.” The primary resource was to be the novel, but he also talked about students using their “personal experience, observations, and other things they have read.” He talked about how this essay was going to be longer, five pages, than previous ones and how it was worth more points.

To familiarize the students with potential themes or concepts for their papers, Dr Jackson divided the class into pairs and assigned each pair a chapter from the novel for which they were responsible for leading the discussion. The assignment was for the students to summarize the chapter, select and read to the class “a passage of your choice,” and then connects it to one or more of the themes discussed in class related to the novel. He said that “we are looking for good stuff...stuff we can bring into Essay #4...to help you develop your topic.” He assured them they didn’t need to stand up in front of the class and face the “laser eyes” of their classmates, but could read and comment from their seats. He also said, “We are going to hear from everybody...nobody is going to get out of it.” Interestingly enough, the students responsible for the discussion of the first two chapters were absent so these chapters were covered by Dr. Jackson.

The student responsible for Chapter 3 was present and began his presentation with a summary. While the student talked, Dr. Jackson wrote phrases on the board connected to what the student was saying, and intermittently turned to say “Ok,” or interjected and expanded on a point he wanted to make. “Now, this is coming before Alex (*the character in the novel*) died...this is a flashback...and the author, John Krakauer is having an interview.” It appeared that even though the responsibility had been placed on the

students for the concepts pulled from the novel, Dr. Jackson still had specific ideas that he didn't want students to miss and so felt the need to add to the student summary. After Dr. Jackson was finished foregrounding the student's summary, he turned back to the student and said, "Good. Now what else?" Sometimes Dr. Jackson would ask the reporting student to expand on something he or she had just said and then Dr. Jackson would repeat back what the student said and add to it as well, all the while writing on the board. After the student commented, Dr. Jackson sometimes said, "Ahhh...ok. Good," or simply "Yeah." This interaction between the student and Dr. Jackson promoted an atmosphere of learning, not so traditional, where the curriculum was being developed by both instructor and student (Nystrand, 1997) and during these interactions, students were participating or not at different levels, flipping through the novel, following along while sections were being read, taking notes or conversely napping, texting, or typing, which was indicative of the casual learning environment that characterized this classroom.

This method of instruction was the pattern for the rest of the quarter and directly in line with Dr. Jackson's goal of teaching students to be able to do "the basic tasks that your instructors are going to expect you to be able to do." When Dr. Jackson spoke to me about his expectations for this course, his bottom line was "I want them to be competent at the basic expository tasks: narrate something, describe something, define something, compare contrast some things, explain some things..." and be able to grasp the deeper meanings of the texts they read. When I asked about the University's expectations of students becoming "metacognitive and rhetorically aware," his response was, "The

material itself sort of encourages that...*Into the Wild*, and *The Things They Carried*, but I'm not measuring them on that. I'm measuring them on communication. No, I'm pretty much meat and potatoes." His views were similar when it came to grammar and Standard English usage.

In the University's Introduction to College Composition manual, the only reference to grammar and sentence structure was in the Freshman Composition 1 overview as it mentioned "proofreading and editing" as part of the composing process that was taught in this class. Clearly, it was assumed that students had a competent grasp of Standard English and, because they were enrolled in this course rather than a lower level one, it was expected that it was not a topic that required extensive instructional attention. But in an interview, Dr. Jackson expressed a different opinion.

Dr. J: Here at SW we really struggle with English as a second language. A lot of students from Korea. A lot of student from Korea, a lot of students from south of the border and they have their struggles...grammar, syntax, usage... lots of tense problems, lots of subject verb agreement. Stuff like that.

R: Do you cover any of that?

J: A little bit, a little bit yeah. Last week we talked a little bit about verb tense.

R: Right.

J: We're actually not...it's not actually part of the course description to deal with that...It is not part of the course description but I do it anyway just because we need to.

Consequently, even though it was not specifically listed in the University's or Freshman Composition 1 expectations, Dr. Jackson spent time in six different class sessions to discuss Standard English usage. On September 28, he spent eight minutes on identifying specific parts of speech in an essay from the text: action verbs, prepositional phrases, proper nouns, adjectives, adverbs, gerunds, and participles. Students quietly listened, some taking notes, some typing on their laptops. Dr. Jackson did not ask for student input, and, in turn, they did not ask any questions. During the next class, he again reviewed the use of verbs, adjectives, adverbs and proper names as part of a "well told story" for Essay #1, a narrative. On October 5, Dr. Jackson spent time talking about sentences:

One of the things I want to talk about is punctuation. Where do you put that period...where do you put that period? That's the same thing as asking what is a sentence. There's all kinds of misunderstandings out there of what a sentence is. It's no big deal.

He handed out sample sentences and spent time going over "typical problems that you need to look for as you're editing and proofreading." First he talked about the elements of a sentence, defining a sentence as having a subject and a verb. He talked next about a fused sentence and a comma splice. He handed each student a paper that a list of 17 sample sentences. He displayed this same list on the screen in front of the class and many

students pulled out pens or pencils and made corrections along with him as he spoke. The first example he talked about was the following sentence:

My first day of class was as awkward as you could imagine, I walked in not knowing a single soul.

(My first day of class was as awkward as you could imagine. I walked in not knowing a single soul.)

He pointed out the verbs and subjects of each sentence and how this needed to be two sentences. He called it the “old comma splice” and said, “We see a lot of that at SW University.” Similar to his discussion of a narrative, his vocabulary was most likely familiar to the students. “Once you’ve got your complete idea, end it with a period and start a new idea.” He spent time talking about verb tenses and how important it was to not shift from past to present tense within the same written piece. He talked about simple past (“she wrote”) versus the use of past perfect (“she had written”) and pointed out the difference. He said to the class, “Some of our SW students use the past perfect all the time instead of the simple past. You don’t want to do that. Use the nice simple past.” He reviewed dialogue punctuation: quotation marks, commas, periods and their proper placement. When he asked questions about punctuating dialogue, “Can we use a comma?” and “Where do we want that period?” several students answered quietly without raising their hands. And he even brought up the need for a question mark when the sentence was asking a question – an issue that students in this class ostensibly should have already mastered. When he asked the question “How do we know it is a question?” there was a scattered reply from different students and some girls even laughed politely,

appearing somewhat embarrassed that he even had to address this issue. At this point, several students' attention appeared to drift away from the instruction as they looked out the window or began to shuffle through papers on their desks. After spending 16 minutes on these grammar issues, he left the students with a warning: "Too many mistakes can drag your grade down." Dr. Jackson's focus on following conventional grammar and usage helped to establish this practice as an expected one in this class, even though it was not explicitly mentioned in the syllabus as part of this course.

On October 18, the class session was all about temporal transitions (first, next, finally) and action verbs. Dr. Jackson assigned students work in groups to find all the temporal transitions and action verbs in a particular essay from *Elements of Writing*. They were given 17 minutes to complete this task. Conversations started up immediately among some of the groups, apparently before they had read the assigned selection. Some students moved their desks closer together and read from the same textbook. Others were drinking from their water bottles, shuffling through backpacks, or opening laptops on their desks. One conversation started with, "What time do you have to be there?" and the response, "7:30." The topic of conversation appeared to have had nothing to do with temporal transitions. One student seemed to grimace as stretched out his legs and opened his textbook, flipping through the pages, seeming to look for the passage he had been assigned. When he directed the attention of the class back up front, he asked one student, "Do we call this a transition?" and when the student, appearing to not be sure of the correct answer hesitated, Dr. Jackson said, "Just yes or no." The student answered with a

quiet “No.” After hearing responses from several groups, Dr. Jackson returned to the issue of verb tense.

By this class session, he had already graded and returned Essay #1 and it appeared that students were still making multiple errors related to verb tense, as his tone of voice revealed a certain level of frustration. He reiterated the difference between simple past and past perfect and reminded the students to not use past perfect all the time. Again, he referred to the second language issues at SW University, which created a divide between those who understood and those who didn’t. His use of the word “control” implied that language was something that could be manipulated, if one understood how to do that, and that if they didn’t understand, they needed to learn. Notice too, he started with an inclusive “our SW students” and in the end gave the directive to “you,” rather than “us.” This pronoun shift appeared to place the responsibility for learning grammar usage back on the student.

Many of our SW students don’t know the difference and as a result they come across as not really in control of their language...it is important to recognize the difference...they don’t mean the same thing...you need to be in control of your language.

Overall, during this class session, he spent eight minutes on verb tense alone. Clearly, this was an issue for many of these students and possibly a source of frustration for Dr. Jackson, as grammar was not supposed to be a focus in this class. It appeared that some of the students were frustrated as well with this topic as one bounced his head up and



down in his hands, another was looking at a Health Waiver from the University, and four students were typing on their laptops.

On October 28, Dr. Jackson spent 23 minutes discussing the use of modifiers: adjective, adverbs, clauses, phrases, and participles. Similes and metaphors were identified in the previously assigned reading homework and students were encouraged to avoid clichés. Essays #1 and #2 had been completed, but clearly, some grammatical problems persisted. This persistent issue could add to the difficulty of those students becoming community members. On October 31, Dr. Jackson returned to verb tense explanations. He explained the use of verbs as related to time and wrote the phrases on the board.

When action takes place further in the past: her sister had run

Past: she ran; she has run; she was running

Present: she runs

Progressive: she was running; she is running; she will be running

Future: she will run

Although according to the University's and Freshman Composition 1 syllabi, expectations of instructional content initially appeared to be about critical thinking and writing in a variety of genres, Dr. Jackson spent time in the classroom on conventional writing strategies, structures, and the use of Standard English. This focus on Standard English and correct structures had the potential to shape this class experience differently

for different students based on whether they struggled with the language or not. Clearly, an expectation of membership was beginning to emerge that required “control” of the English language, and those who did not demonstrate the expected level of correctness in grammar might have found it difficult to be successful in this class. This focus may have been a reflection of his 17 years experience teaching Freshman Composition and knowing about the students at SW University and the challenges they faced with Standard English usage. While his instruction was not at cross purposes with the University expectations and his ultimate goal, as was the University’s, was to introduce students to college level writing, there did appear to be discrepancies between the formally stated policies and the actual classroom practices.

### **Challenges**

My focal students’ perspectives on anticipated challenges for college writing were in some ways different from those of Dr. Jackson in others ways, similar. Their concerns ranged from the expected required length of essays, structural issues, and staying focused with their writing to determining what the professor wanted and striving to meet the demands of the course. I discuss these in detail in Chapters 4-7. While Dr. Jackson also recognized the issues of structure and focus as challenges, he saw the lack of experience in critical reading and communicating ideas through writing as additional difficulties his students would face. I focus on Dr. Jackson’s perspective here.

Defined by Dr. Jackson

The process of joining a new community comes with multiple challenges as the newcomer attempts to discover the expectations of the group as well as turn their own interpretations of these expectations into acceptable practices. In our formal interviews, Dr. Jackson talked about challenges he had seen for students over the years.

J: Well, I think the basic thing is they just haven't read enough. They just haven't read enough so the experience of engaging with text is still an alien experience for them. They really struggle with that. This essay that I'm going to return to them today, they got fairly good grades on it cause it's narrative, it's personal narrative, and so they did ok. You know, they have an instinctual feel for that. Later on I'm going to make them start using the reading and their grades are going to drop off, sharply for a lot of them.

R: So can you explain a little bit what you mean by engaging with the text?

J: Just reading with comprehension and appreciation. Being able to really read with a grasp of what's in front of them, being able to recognize nuances, recognize things like irony...

R: So critical reading basically, of a text.

J: In many cases we have a real struggle just getting them to be able to get the basic content.

Dr. Jackson also referred to the challenges inherent in being second language learners, students for whom English was not their primary language. “Here at SW we really struggle with English as a second language. A lot of students from Korea. A lot of students from Korea, a lot of students from south of the border and they have their struggles.” For these students, grammar, syntax, usage, tense and subject/verb agreement issues were a problem. He went on to describe the general challenge for all students.

And as I said, the real problem is when we ask them to incorporate writing into their writing, synthesize it. Being able to integrate summary and quotations into their own writing. Some of them, you know, just really break down and never do really quite make the connections. And yet some of them do... as I said they can move from the abstract to the specific and back and then they can take somebody else’s language and somebody else’s ideas and integrate it with their own languages...their own language and their own ideas.

Not only did Dr. Jackson address the inherent challenges for college freshmen with me (e.g. in the interviews), he also talked to the students about them in the classroom. He acknowledged their struggles. After one quiz, he said, “Some of you may have struggled a little bit...” or when he talked about revising, he said, “now that’s a pain, nobody wants to cut out stuff they have written,” but added that he was here to help them through it. This acknowledgement of their potential struggles conferred upon them the status of newcomers which in turn granted them temporary “permission” to make mistakes while they learned how to be as a college writer. Another word for this “permission” is the granting of legitimacy, which is discussed in the following section.

The challenges seen by Dr. Jackson appeared to inform his methods of instruction. Because he acknowledged that so many of his students were second language learners, it appeared that he structured his class in such a way as to provide access for these students to the language itself, which added to the definition of this community. For some students, his approach to these challenges and offers of support served to facilitate their entrance to college writing, while for others, the challenges remained and did not bring them any closer to membership.

### **Legitimacy**

As has already been said, the process of joining a new community is complex. It includes learning and interpreting the expectations and challenges which in turn inform the practices and routines expected in a group. It involves participation in those practices, starting with learning and interpreting the norms and expectations of the new community. But there is another requirement for membership and that is being *recognized* as such or at least recognized as having the *potential* of becoming a member along with a provision of access to the community by a current member. According to Wenger, “In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members,” (1998, p. 101). Traditionally, this granting of legitimacy came from a sponsor, someone already a member in the community (e.g. a master working with an apprentice). In the Freshman Composition class, Dr. Jackson was, in this regard, the sponsor of these students. His granting of legitimacy took on different forms. It was displayed through conversation and attitudes, as well as oral and written remarks. It

involved “invitations” into the community as well as indications that the newcomer was or was not meeting the expectations of the community, expectations which may have been modified based on the students themselves.

Initially, of course, the students in this class were granted legitimacy from the University when they passed the entrance exam or took the prerequisite course and were consequently granted access to Freshman Composition 1. The students were, in that sense, on equal footing with one another as potential members of the college writing community.

After being considered ready for college writing by the University, the students were introduced to this community and their potential membership in more detail on the first day of class. Within the confines of this course, Dr. Jackson was their main source of accessibility. It was he who could legitimize students, helping them gain access to the community and develop their potential for membership -- through the details of his instruction and his written feedback on their work, as well as his one-on-one meetings with them in his office. (I focus on this in more detail in Chapters 4-7). Below, I suggest that key to this process was how Dr. Jackson framed his and the students relationship to one another – through the “voices” that he assumed in talking to them and by implication the place that he gave them in the greater university and classroom communities.

### **Dr. Jackson’s Voices**

During the quarter, in the process of providing a way for students to join this community, Dr. Jackson took on three identifiable “voices”: the voice of the institution of

the University; the voice of a counselor within the institution; and the voice of the crowd, that is, the students in his classroom. While these are not the only voices he used during class, they were the most telling in revealing how he connected with the students and connected them to the university and the classroom community. All three voices often intertwined within the same instructional moment, and all three provided varied legitimacies.

#### Voice of the University

From the beginning, Dr. Jackson, speaking with the voice of the University, established himself as the authority with experience and the ability to guide and direct the students into this new community of writers. Because of his role, he was also in the position to either grant or limit membership. At the outset, Dr. Jackson implied potential membership to the students from the University's perspective in the manner in which he referred to them from the start. As he read from the syllabus, he actually used the word "member" to refer to the students².

A more rigorous and sophisticated standard of reading comprehension and written communication is required of you now as *members of the University community* than perhaps has been required of you in the past. *We* want to give *you* more experience in meeting this standard by having *you* read published (and critically acclaimed) texts, think about them, discuss them, and most importantly write in response to them.

One could say that he granted them a kind of legitimacy in assuming that they were "members", addressing them as such ("as members of the University writing

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² All italics in quoted material are my emphasis to use of pronouns and references to students

community”). Yet he took on the voice of the University with his “we” when he said, “*We* want to give you more experience...” and summarized what the University expected from the freshmen: critical reading, thinking, discussing, and writing. In this context, his University voice (“we”) was set in contrast to the students (“you”) as it warned the students that more was going to be required from them than ever before.

Dr. Jackson’s approach to instruction often drew on a kind of university voice, using the language of academia. He framed the expectations for particular assignments in academic terms, followed by a detailed explanation. The first day of class, he listed on the board the answer to the question, “How do I get an A?”:

1. Reading comprehension
2. Unity – one main idea
3. Development – detailed and specific support
4. Coherence – unfolds in a clear and logical way
5. Grammar and usage

Also, when he explained the criteria for each essay, he used the voice of the university and spoke to them with directives as newcomers, not quite at his level: “What *we* (the university) are asking *you* (the newcomer) to do is write about an event in your life.”

Then he listed the expectations for the paper. He directed them to the text (another source of authority), *Elements of Writing*, for more explanations.



During the quarter, he continued as the voice of the University, often outlining the writing program's official expectations specifically and even writing them on the board:

“Basic Criteria of Basic College Writing.”

MLA format

1” margins

Font size 12/ double spaced

Black ink/conservative font

Title that reflects significance

Name, course, date in upper left corner

Page #s

When talking about the requirements for the essays, his choice of words demonstrated his authority as one who knew the official rules of writing in this community. As he directed students in writing Essay #2, for example, a profile of a person, place, or event, he outlined a way of focusing on a topic. He charted a path for students to follow as they approached what may have been, for some, a different genre of writing. He was asking them to be methodical and organized in their process. This wasn't a narrative, but instead a type of writing that required “investigation, organization, and an understanding of their role,” ideas directly from the University's expectations for this class.

What topic have you chosen for Essay #2? What kind of information that is specific to your topic will you need to provide in your profile? Where do you plan to gather this information? What organizational scheme are you considering? Narrative? Topical? A mix? Why do you think this scheme will work best for your particular topic? What role will you play? What dominant impression do you plan for your reader to come away with?

He listed his expectations for Essay #2 on the board and briefly discussed each term.

Narrative (tell us the story)

Process Narrative (narrate a process)

Physical Description (details)

Interview/conversations (let us hear people's voices)

Explanation/background (make sure you bring in what is needed so the reader can appreciate your topic)

Reflection (show the significance)

For Essay #3, Dr Jackson gave another detailed outline of his expectations for the assignment. He wrote on the board and talked briefly about each term:

A Focused Explanation – make the topic clear

Readable Plan (he said he would talk more about his later)

A strategy:

Classification (referred to cannibal story)

Definition (defining of unfamiliar terms)

Cause and effect narrative (referred to story in the textbook)

Exemplification (illustrating it)

Process narrative (walking your reader through a process)

Comparison and Contrast

In sum, a number of sections of his formal instruction in the classroom were given in the voice of the University authority. He explained his expectations using academic language, going over terms that may have been new to the freshmen. His criteria and language choices came from the academic textbook and included instruction that would be helpful in future classes all as a way of providing access to college writing for these new students. Along with familiarizing students with academic vocabulary, this voice functioned to shape a set of expectations for being a participant in this community. Dr. Jackson's speaking as the voice of the university also helped to establish his role as the authority in the classroom which in turn shaped the students' response and interpretation of his expectations. However, seemingly cognizant of the idea that freshmen need to hear more than just the voice of the University, he would switch registers into the voice of a Counselor.

#### Voice of the Counselor

The purpose of a counselor is to provide guidance. It is to come alongside the student as one who knows and help her to be successful in school by offering means of support and advice, championing her when successes come, and encouraging her to seek

help when needed. Dr. Jackson often used this voice during his instruction. On the first day of class, he began reading through the syllabus about the overarching objectives of Freshman Composition in the voice of the University: “This course is an opportunity for *you* to develop thinking, reading, and writing skills that will benefit *you* throughout *your* university coursework and into *your* professional lives,” putting the responsibility on the student with the use of “you.”

Then he switched into the voice of the Counselor who, as a guide and support system, was going to help the students as they navigated this new community. His “we” took on a different meaning than before. “*We* will be reading...*Our* course focus will be on...*we* will also organize...*we’ll* see if *we* can approach that kind of understanding...” With “we” here, he seemed to bring them into his fold, as a counselor might, saying in essence to the class, “we” will go through this process together as I have already been there and can help you. He was acting as their sponsor. He invited their participation and promised to, in effect, show them the ropes. He did this also when he talked about his office hours and availability, which he did four different times during the quarter. He encouraged them after returning graded essays, if they couldn’t figure out how to fix the problem, to come to his office because “that’s why you come see me...that’s what I’m doing in my office...”

On September 30, when he returned a quiz, he explained the different markings on their returned papers.

Check plus is an A; A check means solid...not spectacular, but solid. It's a B, in the B range. A check minus is about a C-...Now this is my way of giving you feedback on how you're doing with the reading. If you've really got the reading locked and you're getting a lot out of it, I can give you that check plus which makes me feel good. It makes you feel good. If you're on the right track, I can give you a check...but if it looks like something's missing, gotta give you that check minus.

Notice how he celebrated with them, "...makes me feel good. It makes you feel good," in their successes, creating a sense of camaraderie between him and the students as they strove for the common goal of satisfaction with their work. He continued with the counselor's advice if they were not happy with his feedback, and his advice sometimes included humor as well, which seemingly made the advice more palatable: "A) do the reading; B) do it *while you're awake* or C) do it a little more carefully, take a little more time with it." In a different class session, Dr. Jackson, again shaping the expectations for being a successful member of this community, discussed the importance of reading the entire book that they were using to write Essay #5 or the "gaps will show up...the moral of the story is...read all assigned." In reference to an assignment in the textbook, he advised them to "Please, please read that section," then, as a counselor would, he recognized their potential confusion and came alongside them, adding "we're going to go over that...go over the pages together," with his "we" again bringing them into his fold.

With the counselor voice, he legitimized students' struggles and assured them that he was in this with them. After explaining verb tenses, he said "Some of *us* are struggling a little bit with this...the reader needs to know this...you don't want to confuse your reader." And then he finished up with the promise to help, "Well, *we*'ll keep

working on that...keep working on that. That's a tough one." His use of "we," again reinforced his offer of support and guidance by putting himself in their group and they in his. The acknowledgment of their struggle allowed students, even though some appeared to be coming up short of his expectations as college level writers, to turn these "stumbling and violations [into] opportunities for learning rather than causes for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion"(Wenger, 1998, p. 101). He, as a counselor, finished up this conversation with encouraging words: "I expect to see improvement here...I expect to see an upward movement. So those check minuses are going to turn into checks...maybe even check pluses...so I'm looking forward to that." Within this culminating statement about student progress, Dr. Jackson established another routine indicating membership. "Improvement" and "upward movement" were now expectations for a student if they wanted to show progress. As he was "looking forward to that," he implied this community was one whose members were on an upward trajectory of improvement as writers. Consequently, if a student *wasn't* improving, his potential for membership might be in question.

After spending time during the previous three classes on grammar and usage, when some students did not appear to be showing signs of "upward movement," Dr. Jackson's approach shifted. He had just returned an essay in which it appeared that students were still making multiple errors related to verb tense, and his tone of voice revealed his frustration. This lack of progress by some students represented a breach of the routine of continual progress he had been "looking forward to," his frustration

revealing itself as he addressed the grammar issues once again. He reiterated the difference between simple past and past perfect and reminded the students to not use past perfect all the time. Again, he recognized some of SW's students' difficulties with the English language, and yet this time did not include himself in this context almost as if he was explaining to a third party about these students' issues with language. He starts with the inclusive "our SW students," then switched to "they" which seemed to create yet another group of people separate from the students in the classroom. His use of "you" returned the responsibility to the students to fix this problem:

Many of *our* SW students don't know the difference and as a result *they* come across as not really in control of their language...it is important to recognize the difference...*they* don't mean the same thing...*you* need to be in control of *your* language.

As he continued to point out the differences, his voice got louder as he asked specific students for answers and emphasized certain words. "...there HAD BEEN...uh oh...uh oh...we're putting in haves and hads...AARRRGGG...what does that mean? What does that mean?" He appeared to be "scolding" the students and, switching into the voice of the university, again explained the use of verbs as related to time.

During another class session, near the end of the quarter, Dr. Jackson was talking about the final book they were reading for the class. Several different voices surfaced as he set up another expectation for membership in this community. In his first comment, he used the "we" collectively as "we" are in this together and I am going to read this book with you. Then he switched to the use of "you," as he addressed those students, for whom

it would be a challenge to meet this expectation, drawing a line between those who had done this before and those who hadn't. Speaking from experience, he explained the benefits to "you" for whom this might be a new experience, which will be a "good exercise" which seemed to define yet another routine that was a part of this community. His final "we" was that of the counselor again, "encouraging you" to participate.

*"We are going to read this whole thing. We are going to read it all. It's a challenge for some people, that you gotta read a whole book. Now some of you have done this before or some of you haven't...if can have the experience of reading a book all the way through, you'll know what reading is all about. If you read a whole book, you'll find out that you gotta remember it...and that's a good exercise to have. So we're going to encourage you to read this all the way through."*

#### A Writing Discussion

On October 3, Dr. Jackson's University and Counselor voice worked in tandem with one student's essay draft as he gave instructional tips on how to improve as well as encouragement that the writer was on the right track. Dr. Jackson had collected the draft of students' Essay #1 and then read a portion of one out loud to the whole class. After he read the piece, he discussed the possibility of a better focus for the paper while making comments such as: "This has such an interesting wrinkle in the story...a very interesting situation." He talked about how the writer could cut out some of the unnecessary information to focus on the interesting "wrinkle." He gave multiple suggestions about how the writer could address this incident in a different light and finished with "I'm not saying he needs to do it this way, but he's going to have to make some decisions...now that doesn't mean it's a bad draft...it's a GREAT draft...a wonderful draft...but what he



needs to do now is he needs to make some decisions.” Dr. Jackson spent three minutes of class time discussing this student’s paper and in the process, offered a particular level of legitimacy for this new writer. First, just by choosing this particular paper, he was implicitly recognizing it as worthy of discussion. He read the paper and talked about the interesting topic and a possible focus. At one point he recognized the difficulties in the revision process: “Now that’s going to be a pain...nobody wants to do that. Nobody wants to cut out what they’ve written,” which aligned Dr. Jackson with the students in the difficult process of revision, as the understanding counselor. He went on to give suggestions for revision, yet acknowledged the writer’s ability to make his own choices, which again conferred a level of legitimacy on this writer as competent enough to function independently in this community. Dr. Jackson then finished with praise for the draft.

#### Voice of The Fellow Student

The third voice granting students access to this community reflected Dr. Jackson identifying himself as “one of them,” that is, one of the students. This type of talk served to minimize and blur the boundaries between instructor and student roles as well as reveal a certain amount of empathy of the instructor toward to the student (Sperling & Woodlief, 1997). Again, he did this with his use of the inclusive pronouns “we,” “us,” and “our,” in particular contexts and also sometimes used the lingo of a freshman student.

From the very start of class, there were multiple incidences of Dr. Jackson including himself as a fellow member in this class. In the course description, he wrote:

Life is defined by limits, birth and death being the most obvious. Although *we* often spend much of *our* energy trying to avoid these extremes, *we* are also interested in them. *We* can't help but wonder: What is it like to approach life's limits?...narratives...help *us* understand those limits...*we'll* see if *we* can approach that kind of understanding in *our* reading and writing.

This use of “we” and “our,” while referring to humans in general, also in effect served as an invitation to the students to join Dr. Jackson in this journey of discovery about extremes in life. This would have read quite differently if the pronoun of “you” had been used instead. He set himself up from the start as a fellow community member going through this class with them and they with him.

After collecting the first quiz, he recognized that some students might have struggled and adopted the voice of a student questioning himself as to what the instructor wanted as an answer to the quiz question. “What the heck do I write? What do I say? I don't know...she writes words on the page...see there's the words...she writes them down. Well, what else do you want?” Then he switched back to the counselor voice with, “Let's see if *we* can get a little more specific than that.” With his use of a student member's voice and lingo, he exhibited their possible frustration, in effect making it an acceptable emotion to have at this point, and then spoke to that student as the wiser counselor. In another class discussion, he talked about the frustration of some grammar issues and included himself with them when he said, “Some of us are still struggling with this.” Even though it was obvious that he himself was not really struggling, the use of this inclusive language reflected his understanding of where the students were coming from (if I may use their language myself). And after discussing an essay from the textbook for

18 minutes on October 26, he finished the discussion with “Most people don’t like this essay much,” another validation of what some students might have been feeling at this point as he recognized their possible dislike of his choice.

Throughout the quarter, he often used student language. When he talked about how to receive feedback from their peers when they met in groups, he said, “Listen to the people in your group. What do they have to suggest? They might have some good suggestions. Maybe not...if you hear a terrible suggestion... be polite... nod your head...but then *forget about it*.” On October 14, when explaining the need to choose an exotic or different topic for the profile essay, he talked about a student in another class choosing his grandmother as the focus. He said, “Everybody said, *awwwww...your grandma*. That’s great write about grandma...but again, everybody’s got a grandma...but if your grandma is like a *gang-banger*...then you don’t have to worry about it.” When explaining about the importance of including a “Works Cited” page in their essay, he said the only way to do a good job is to look at the textbook. He said some students don’t do that, so “they do a *crappy* job” on the page. Multiple times throughout the quarter, Dr. Jackson similarly used student language: “We are going to be comparing *stuff* that happens in the movie to *stuff* that happens in the novel...By the way, all this *stuff* is up on Blackboard... I *gotta* a lot of *stuff* here for *ya*...when you get your homework, you’re good...*good to go*.” As indicated earlier, doing so, he softened the distance between his University self and the students a bit, making himself a part of their community and they part of his and in essence widening the road to membership.

### In Contrast

From another perspective, while Dr. Jackson appeared to make multiple efforts to create bridges of access for students into the college writing community by using three different “voices,” some of his use of the collective “we” could also have been interpreted as creating a division. His use of the word “we” in his recognition of students’ struggles, depending on the students’ perspective, could have been interpreted as a label of inability of some students to rise to the level of expectations. It was obvious that the instructor, even though he used the pronoun “we,” did not struggle with the language, but instead, had just separated the “non-struggler” from the “strugglers.” Based on feedback on essays and homework that may have pointed out grammar issues, some students may have felt excluded. After the first paper was returned, he talked about grammar errors, he mentioned that they might notice markings in the margin and “some of *you* will notice this A LOT...” which, again possibly served to create a division. When Dr. Jackson talked about the meaning behind his written comments, he explained that when parts of the paper might be a bit confusing, “I have comments in the margins. I may ask a little question...make a little suggestion...to give you a little feedback, to give you a sense of how you are doing.” At this point, his use of “little” appeared to soften the criticisms on the paper, and created an environment where the issues were not insurmountable, but only “little,” which appeared to minimize the seriousness of the errors and implied they could be fixed. While this may have lessened the divide between those who weren’t meeting community norms and those who were, it did not eliminate it.

As evidenced by Dr. Jackson's comments in class and in his interviews, he believed his job was to help these students enter the college writing community. His use of three different "voices" appeared to reflect ways for students to gain legitimacy and to show that in reality, these voices could meld into one. As the University, he created his expertise, authority, and superior status. As a Counselor, he offered his guidance and support for students to become experts too. As a Fellow Student, he demonstrated his understanding of their status as freshmen, and willingness to merge with them. All three of these validated the students as potential members of this community of writers.

### **In Summary**

Students in Freshman Composition 1 were faced with the task of learning how to be in a college writing community. Through their responses to the repertoires, routines, expectations, and challenges that emerged throughout the quarter and their choice to participate or not, they either began the journey toward membership or remained outside the circle of members. The legitimacy granted them by Dr. Jackson, was a key factor in the shaping of the community. The explicit and implicit norms that were established were perpetuated by instructor and student alike to form the characteristics of this writing community. While it appeared that ten weeks was not enough time to become a fully functioning member, this initial experience laid essential ground work for students' eventual inclusion in the college writing community, while creating for some an excluding divide.

In this chapter, I created a picture of my case study classroom, Freshman Composition 1, a traditionally structured classroom with a casual and contemporary flavor. In Chapters 4-7, I discuss in some detail the experiences of my focal students as freshmen in college entering a new writing community. As these chapters show, two chose to participate fully and were well on their way to being members of this community; one consciously opted for partial participation, yet was also on her way towards membership; and another appeared to opt for non-participation, leading to negative consequences.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Story of Kevin**

Kevin knew how to “be a student.” He participated in key practices of the community, which in turn fostered his ability to gain access to college writing. Dr. Jackson recognized Kevin as a potential member through oral and written feedback and Kevin, in turn, was able to improve the quality of his writing as evidenced by his grades.

#### **Entering a New Community**

Kevin always took a seat in the front row and did not deviate from that choice all quarter. He came to class dressed in jeans and a t-shirt or a button down with short sleeves. When the instructor entered, Kevin would stop talking, adjust his notebook on his desk, face forward, and give his attention to the front of the room. He rarely talked to his neighbors and when he did, it was only when the instructor had given him permission, as in a group setting or discussion time. Kevin appeared to understand what “being a student” looked like and seemed to accept his role as one.

As I did not sit near Kevin in the classroom, my information about his experience came from three different interviews conducted throughout the quarter. The first time we met, it was in my “office” which was located on the second floor hallway in a building on the SW University campus. My focal students and I would sit on the floor as we talked,

creating a very casual atmosphere. Kevin came across as one prepared for the rigors of college, yet not quite ready for complete immersion in college life.

### Background

Kevin was born and raised in a city 20 minutes from the university; however, his parents were from India. They had lived in a very small city called Gutra. Both were college educated and it was expected that Kevin and his siblings would pursue a college education as well. Kevin was not a native English speaker and grew up learning to speak a dialect of Hindi called Gujarati. He started learning to speak English in kindergarten at the age of six, and on the weekends his uncle, fluent in English, would come and work with him on his speaking and writing in English. Although his parents were also proficient in English, they primarily spoke Gujarati at home. He said that if his parents did speak English, they would do so carefully as it was important to them to speak proper English. He admitted that sometimes he would struggle with sentence structures in English and “jumble it up” but that he recognized right away when what he had written was wrong and could fix it. Kevin found being bi-lingual made him feel “more sophisticated” although he did not explain what he meant by that. In his home, learning was valued and the pursuit of a higher education was expected. In Kevin’s words, “I think at a young age my mom was like, school...like graduating college is your only option...it was engrained in us.”



Kevin has two sisters, one currently at this same university and another getting her master's degree at a different location. He had visited this campus when visiting his sister and felt that it would be a good fit for him. "I really like the campus...all the people are very excited...I think it's a good choice." Even though Kevin felt this was the place for him to pursue education, he wasn't quite ready to completely commit to the college life.

R: You living in the dorms?

K: No, I commute.

R: Is that by choice that you commute?

K: I think it was during our orientation I stayed, I just...I am a very homebody person so I was like, I'd just rather stay at home...having my own room is a big deal.

I did not ask him whether he would move onto the campus in the future.

While Kevin didn't appear to feel pressure from his parents to go to college, he did have two sisters and a set of parents who were living examples of their belief in higher education. Kevin didn't complain about the path ahead of him but instead seemed excited about his prospects. He admitted that it was more important to him to get As than it was for his parents. I asked him how he would feel if he received a B in this class and

he said his parents would not be upset but that he would be upset with himself. The expectations he had set for himself were high.

In high school, he had taken AP Language and Composition in his junior year and AP Literature and Composition in his senior year.

K: Junior year, our AP class, it was more like you read books and analyze it and interpret it and actually, like grade wise, I did better in that class because...when it came to reading books and analyzing stuff. And so like my teacher even said like I knew what...how to write. I knew like how to construct an essay.

R: And where did you learn that?

K: I think I had...my sophomore year teacher was probably the best English teacher I had and he really taught us really well how to really write a paper and how to construct it well and to put quotes in...

R: Ok. And then your senior year?

K: Senior year? Well, for our school we had like this senior project. It was like our senior thesis that took an entire year. And so the writing we did that wasn't involved with our senior project our teacher pretty much just gave us a hundred percent because they had other stuff to do regarding the senior project. So I didn't get really get critique on how my writing was

that year so I kind of...I kind of forgot how to write a little because I didn't really get proper critique on my writing and so...

R: And how do you...if you were going to rate yourself, would you call yourself a successful writer?

K: Currently? Probably not. Just like average.

Kevin came to the SW University with several forms of access already in place. His parents being college educated as well as his two sisters who were currently in college likely provided Kevin with knowledge about college and the expectations of a college student. His family's belief that college was his "only option" planted a sense of legitimacy for the University experience overall. This suggests that Kevin may have already been familiar with particular routines and practices associated with being in a University, all of which may have functioned to prepare him to enter this new community willing to fully participate. Even though Kevin did not pass his AP exams, he had already been granted a measure of legitimacy via his sophomore teacher who had told him he "knew how to write...to construct an essay," skills that aligned with the expectations for Freshman Composition 1 as discussed in Chapter 3. His experience with his sophomore English teacher, whom he characterized as the "best English teacher I had," also fostered the legitimacy of instructors in general, a sentiment that carried over to Dr. Jackson which is evident in Kevin's comments about him later on in this chapter. Kevin's self evaluation as an "average" writer may have been a gesture of modesty, or it may have

been a reflection of his desire to improve his writing skills and therefore evidence of his recognition of the role of the University and instructor in helping him to further foster his writing ability.

I also asked Kevin about the skills and knowledge he brought from high school that he felt would be helpful in this class.

K: I always, always make an outline. It was becoming a junior when I started to write...so like ever since then I always like...like have my...my paragraph one and I outline what I should include and what I should write about.

R: And why do you do that?

K: Well, cuz it's...I've learned it's very organizational and really helpful that if you have an outline, if you just refer to that you can remember what to write and it's not all scrambled in your head. Another skill had to do with vocabulary. . . Grammar. Vocabulary wise I learned that ummm...you have to use bigger words to sound more like...professional.

R: Do you feel...that brings up an interesting thing...do you feel like you have a command of college writing language yet?

K: [I don't think so.]

R: Did you have much instruction in grammar and sentence structure in high school?

K: Not really because I think by then...well, I'm just assuming, that by then I'm pretty sure my class...we were pretty average sentence...

R: You knew how to do that?

K: Yeah.

R: Ok, so you sound smarter when you use...

K: Bigger words.

Kevin's list of skills that brought from high school -- outlining, grammar, and vocabulary -- all potentially afforded him access to college writing as these were in line with skills expected by Dr. Jackson as he talked about writing expectations for freshman composition. The common expectations of high school and college also likely served to legitimize the University and Dr. Jackson as recognized resources for writing. Kevin's high school writing experience appeared to be rather typical in that he had some teaching that was good and some that was not so good. He passed the university writing entrance exam with a 10, so he appeared to be more than ready for being part of a college writing community.

#### Repertoires/Routines/Participation

Unlike many of the other students, Kevin did not use a laptop during class. He sat in the front row and appeared to take notes the traditional way, in a spiral notebook. He was present at each class session and never late. During class, Kevin gave choral answers along with the other students who did so when Dr. Jackson asked a general question.

When students met in groups, he appeared to be engaged and was the spokesperson for the group when sharing with the class what the group had discussed. Kevin participated regularly in the routine of office visits and these visits, he said, influenced his writing. I discuss his office visits and his writing in more detail later in this chapter.

### Expectations and Challenges

Kevin had a difficult time articulating his expectations for the class. He talked more about his expectations of a successful writer and what he believed Dr. Jackson's expectations to be, referring to "what we learned on Monday."

K: Someone who can...someone who can write an essay without repeating themselves over...

R: Ok.

K: ...or doing something like that. Ummm...they understand what's going on.

R: You mean they understand what the professor's asking?

K: Yeah. Yeah. They have like the ummm...grammar skills and they know how to capture an audience's attention.

R: Ok. Anything else?

K: Mmm.

R: What do you think is [the instructor's] definition of a successful writer?

K: Someone who at...well... be like from what I...what we learned on Monday that someone who after writing the first time like their first draft like they can look at a paper and notice what's not really working, what is and basically someone who can do better than their first draft, who can grow as a writer.

On the Monday to which Kevin is referring, Dr. Jackson had spent time talking about the characteristics of a narrative, saying, "What you're looking for is a focus, a thematic focus...a dominant impression and a thesis to really focus your experience." This was also the session in which it was Kevin's draft that Dr. Jackson read out loud and discussed in reference to the draft's focus, which he said might need some revision (see Chapter 3). Kevin's comments suggest a certain level of participation as he was able to reiterate what was talked about in class on that Monday as well as revise his paper according to Dr. Jackson's comments. The subsequent changes Kevin made to his draft also evidenced his belief in the role of Dr. Jackson as an authority and resource on writing. While Kevin apparently accepted Dr. Jackson's comments as directions toward college writing, he did mention some concerns he had about Dr. Jackson's teaching style.

K: In this current class, I feel like the way [the instructor] is like teaching it is kind of different from the way I was taught in my high school. In that it was just...they kind of told of like what they expected and you had to write but in this class it's more free and so you don't really...there isn't a

certain standard you have to write by and it's a little confusing because I'm not sure if [the instructor] will like the paper or not.

R: So the expectations aren't as clearly outlined? Is that a struggle for you, do you think?

K: I think it is a struggle because, again, with our essay one, when we got our topic in this class, it just said that one thing, it said we just had to write it vividly and descriptively and so that for me, that's very broad and for my other classes it said write vividly and descriptively but mention this, this and this...so it's like...

R: So not quite as directed.

K: Yeah.

While on one level, Kevin had been legitimized in class through Dr. Jackson's comments, on another level, he felt challenged by the lack of explicit guidelines for Essay #1 which did not align with the way he had been taught in high school. It appeared that Kevin recognized his own position as a newcomer with a need for more direction from the expert, which may have further led him to take up Dr. Jackson's offers of one-on-one office visits. He was also concerned about Dr. Jackson's evaluation of his writing and whether he would "like it or not," which suggested that having the instructor's approval was another recognized avenue of access toward meeting college writing expectations.



When I asked him if there were any other challenges he anticipated, he shook his head, “Mmmm. Not really.”

When Dr. Jackson collected a draft of the first essay, he spent some time in class reading aloud paragraphs of student drafts and making comments on what he would do to improve on them. Kevin’s draft was one of the ones read aloud. I asked about the changes that the instructor suggested and how those comments had influenced his essay.

R: [ok] So tell...talk...can you talk to me a little about what you did?

K: Oh...well when I first got the topic I thought ...well from the examples we read in the book I noticed that a lot of the writers were very descriptive about scenery and stuff and I thought that would be very important so in my first draft I was very descriptive about my street, the sunny day. I was descriptive about when I talked to my mom about riding my bike and stuff and then after...once I revised it I took out a lot of the like things...in my first draft I had a lot of conversation dialogue and I took out a lot of it because I thought it wasn’t necessary after what he said and I added more commentary than I did dialogue.

R: Ok, so you kind of switched.

K: Yeah.

R: Ok, then how did you change it to reflect the focus he suggested?

K: Ummm...well because my original focus was about how...umm...just be...how that experience taught me to be alert and cautious but I changed the focus on how the driver who left should have been more responsible and then changed the significance to owning up to your actions.

As seen earlier, Kevin had said the challenges he faced in the class had to do with finding out and giving the instructor what he wanted when the expectations weren't explicitly outlined and the need to use "bigger" words to sound smart; however, the actual revisions Kevin made on his essays went beyond surface characteristics and entailed changes related to the focus and structures of the essays. This was another example of Kevin's willingness to engage in practices that would meet Dr. Jackson's expectations as well as legitimize Dr. Jackson as the authority. As indicated above, during class on the day he talked about Kevin's essay, Dr. Jackson emphasized the need for a focus and the possible need to change the focus of the draft he had read aloud (Kevin's draft). Kevin's response was to attempt to comply with Dr. Jackson and change the draft to align with his suggestions. Kevin shared with me that he had taken the draft and made the changes immediately after class on that day. In this way, he seems to have invested in the college's writing expectations and to have recognized that Dr. Jackson was providing him access to this community through his instruction.

At the end of our first interview, I asked Kevin if he felt ready for challenges of college level writing and he admitted to not feeling like he had a command of the

language at this point. Yet when I questioned him about potential success in this class, he said, “I think I’ll be successful in this class. It’s barely the second week and so I’m still trying to get adjusted to college classes but eventually, but the fifth week, I think I’ll be ok.” I also asked Kevin when he felt like he would consider himself a successful writer, and he said, “I think I will definitely know when I write something, and I can write without having to take a break or refer back to my notes. I can just write without second guessing myself.” So Kevin entered Freshman Composition 1 with a cautious optimism about his own ability to be successful and meet the challenges of becoming a college writer.

After seven weeks of class, I asked again about the challenges he was facing as he learned to write for college. Rather than challenges for this class in particular, he talked about the difficulty in managing his time as he juggled classes, deadlines, and homework, but did not appear to be overly concerned about Freshman Composition 1. He also mentioned some issues with sentence structures that Dr. Jackson had pointed out and felt his own struggle in this area was due to his not learning English until he was six. I asked him if he felt he had overcome the initial concerns he had had for this class, and his response was not that he had overcome them but instead had learned to go to office hours.

R:     So, now that we are revisiting the challenge...now that you’ve listened to what you said before which was that the professor wasn’t explaining it to

you the way you were used to, right? How is it different now? Or do you feel like the challenges have changed? Or have you overcome those challenges, or what?

K: I don't feel like I've overcome them but I now go to office hours. If that counts? I go there before every essay is due. I always go now, just to have his opinion. And it's working.

R: Good for you³. So have you felt like the challenges that you talked about, did they...were they come true? For this was when the beginning of class started so when you talked about "expectations of his classes not as clearly outlined, struggled with the prompt a little because it's vague, not quite as directive." Do you feel like that's not really an issue so much anymore?

K: It still is sometimes, but I think now that like I am getting more comfortable in talking to the professor, I think it's a little less...it's still challenging but not so much an issue any more.

This rise in Kevin's comfort level and his feeling that the challenges were diminishing was an indication of his increasing level of membership in this community.

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³ I found myself drawn into the conversation with Kevin as I took on a counselor voice of encouragement rather than that of an objective researcher. I attribute this to Kevin's enthusiasm and increasing self confidence about his writing.

As Kevin recognized Dr. Jackson as a resource, Kevin's primary method of dealing with his writing challenges was to consult the instructor. Kevin received an A- on his second essay and was very proud of his accomplishment. When I asked him about it, he explained, "Well, uhhh...well first I went to office hours because he said like... he said the first day of school that's he's there to help so I just... well, he is there to help so you might as well just go." He said the instructor was very specific on what he did and didn't like about Kevin's draft, so Kevin "just kinda did what he said." Kevin had found how to view the instructor as a resource.

Our final interview took place in my "office," and included all my focal students except for Mark. We revisited the idea of the challenges of entering this new writing community. I asked if any new challenges had emerged that they had not anticipated. Kevin could not think of any as he felt it was all "ok." Although he didn't consider this class to be a "piece of cake... it was easier than I (*Kevin*) expected it to be." He said that at first he had been concerned about the possibility of having to write a ten-page essay, an indication of his not yet fully knowing at first what community he was entering, but that didn't happen. I asked him about any successes he experienced.

I didn't know like I was going to be an ok writer because the way [the instructor] talked it seemed like your essays need to be really good and I didn't really...when I turned my essays in I didn't think they were that well written but all the comments actually he... he was like, you're a really good writer.

When I asked him about how he was feeling about himself as a college writer he said he felt like he was a better writer than he was when he started, but also saw the importance of learning to write for other classes, but “differently so you’re not like 100% college writer. You still have to learn to juggle ideas...” He said that he wasn’t writing in his other classes, other than “fill in the blank type” as he identified himself as a “chemistry and math” student. As to the changes he had made in his writing due to this class, he said, “I definitely use commentary. Before I would just use an example and summarize it, but now...looking at...rereading my first essay I see that I should explain stuff much better.” To summarize his experience of entering this new community, Kevin said “It was tough at first. It’s getting better.”

Kevin exhibited self-confidence as we talked during our final interview. He believed the instructor had the ultimate knowledge and authority on writing technique. He had learned to talk with the instructor outside of class, in the instructor’s office, and had visited the instructor prior to the final draft on each essay. He learned to incorporate the instructor’s suggestions, given both inside and outside of the classroom, and he attributed his good grades to this process.

### Kevin’s writing

Following are the prompts and Kevin’s responses to Essays #1, #2, #3 and #4 and a discussion of the three different perspectives.

## **Essay #1**

**“Remembering an Event” - Write an essay about an event in your life that will engage readers and that will, at the same time, help them understand the significance of the event. Tell your story dramatically and vividly.**

**Consult *Elements of Writing*, to review the features that make this kind of essay effective. Consult for suggestions as to how you can come up with ideas, plan, draft, and revise your essay.**

**This essay needs to be at least three pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 3. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 7. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to MyWork in order for you to receive credit for the assignment.**

7 October 2011

Mayhem on ██████████ Avenue

It was the best weekend, weather-wise, ██████████ had. The sun was shining, brightening houses and making the day even more spectacular. There was also a subtle breeze roaming around, keeping everything cool and fresh; the perfect balance. On days like those, children would play outside, climb trees, ride bikes, play soccer and do other typical activities.

For some reason on that Saturday, ██████████ Avenue, the street I used to live on was completely empty. Even though no one else wanted to enjoy the amazing weather, I still wanted to. Since I needed someone to watch me, I thought maybe my sister could look over me while I play.

I ran upstairs to my sister ██████████ room to ask if she would come outside and watch me.

"Will you come outside so I can play?" I asked.

My sister said yes and asked what it was I wanted to do.

"Can I ride my bike outside?"

My sister nodded in agreement. "Ok."

I ran to my garage and got my bike. I still remember how it looked. It was a hand-down, rusty, old bike with scratches all over the front. The white paint on the bike chipped in random places and the shine on the wheels was gone. The padding over the handlebars was gone, the seat cushion was tearing and the kickstand that supported the bike upright was gone. For me however, it was perfect.

#1

Nice title

★

What  
how old  
were you?  
(when)

Nice  
details



Extra narrative details.

2

I got my bike out on the driveway and began to ride. I biked to the top of my alley and sped back down, swerved between trashcans and cruised past speed bumps, like I usually biked. However, when I was headed back towards my driveway, the chain on my bike came undone. I tried to steer my bike along and pedal at the same time, but it was useless so I panicked.

"I yelled frightened. "My bike broke!"

Since I was not that far from my sister, she managed to get a hold of my bike and stop me.

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah, but my bike broke," I said sadly.

"No," my sister said pointing to the chain that came off rotation. "I think the chain broke." My sister began to analyze the bike and dismembered chain to see the problem.

"Go get me a screwdriver. I'll try to reattach the chain."

I ran back into the garage and got the red screwdriver. Fortunately, my sister was able to realign and reattach the chain with my bike so it would work properly again. "Ok. Now test-drive your bike. See if it works," said.

I mounted myself back on my bike and cycled back to the alley, when I noticed a gold GMC van in front of my neighbor's house. I test-drove my bike while keeping a distance away from the car. Almost in an instant, I saw the gold GMC's white reverse lights turn on. In less than a blink of an eye, the car reversed toward me, going faster than twenty miles per hour.

As I saw the car come at me, like a reflex I abandoned my bike by jumping off so I could get out of the way. I hit the ground with such force that I bruised my elbow and

Good dialogue

^{ruined (w)}  
cuts on my left arm. After I fell on the ground, I turned around with just enough time to see my rusty, old bike get pummeled by the monstrous GMC.

Right as the GMC hit my bike, I heard my sister yell my name because she assumed the car hit me. She ran after me, startled and terror-stricken to see if I were all right. Once my sister got to my side, she breathed a sigh of relief realizing I was not injured and helped me up. After initially hearing a crash, the gold GMC stopped with my bike still under it. The door of the GMC opened and out stepped the driver who almost hurt me. The driver was a very small woman with curly brown hair and a beaky nose. She wore denim jeans, a purple shirt and had a pair of tacky, blue sunglasses on.

"You almost ran over my brother!" ~~she~~ yelled.

"What? I thought it was a trashcan," the woman said. "I didn't see you when I reversed." I ^w remember her hysterically saying, "I'm sorry" over and over again.

After making sure I was all right, my sister contemplated what to do. "I have to call my mom."

"No," the woman said, half panicking and half remorseful. "He is alright. It's fine."

However, my sister did not listen. "Stay here. I am bringing mom," ~~she~~ told me.

As I saw my sister sprint back to my house to get my mom, the woman ran back into her gold GMC and sped off. By the time my mom got to the scene of the crash, the frantic woman was nowhere on ~~the~~ Avenue.

My mom asked my neighbors several times who the driver was, in hopes they would tell who the woman was, but my neighbors never told. For the rest of the time I lived in ~~the~~ I never once saw a gold GMC on ~~the~~ Avenue again.

It is ^uunfortunate that the driver responsible for what occurred never was caught.  
~~As an adult~~ she did not act like a mature ^{adult} ~~one~~ because she ran away from being liable for  
her decisions. However, this occurrence ^{is} ~~has~~ been eye opening for me because I learned  
something the reckless driver ^{failed (w)} ~~lacked~~ to learn. I understand ^{that I must} ~~to~~ take responsibility for my  
actions, no matter how severe they are and to deal with the consequences. It is a ^{lot of} ~~little~~  
cliché because it ^{you must (w)} ~~almost~~ took me being hit by a car to learn that no matter how old you  
are, be responsible for the decisions you make and be careful when it comes to driving.

Appropriate  
&  
logical  
reflections

~~Thank~~

You do a good job of narrating your story, providing plenty of narrative & descriptive details. Your reflections are appropriate. All this really needs is a little more editing & proofreading. Let's keep working on verb tenses & word choice.

B

## **Essay #2**

**“The Profile” - Write an essay about an intriguing person, group of people, place, or activity in your community. Observe your subject closely, and then present what you have learned in a way that informs and engages your readers.**

**Consult *Elements of Writing*, to review the features that make a profile effective. Consult suggestions as to how you can come up with a topic, plan, draft, and revise your essay.**

**This essay needs to be at least four pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 17. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 24. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to MyWork in order for you to receive credit for the assignment.**

21 October 2011

### Do You Know What They Do?

At 3:00 pm last Wednesday, I sat at a bench right under the shade. I was looking at the cemented building right in front of me with the shiny, bright windows. The windows on the left side had giant blue letters that spelled out the words [redacted]. When I looked inside that building, I saw students pacing back and forth with papers, some students on computers working and groups working together on projects. ^{while (exam)} Just by observing the people inside the [redacted] building, I realized that some students do not know what [redacted] is, what it is they do, or the major role they have when it comes to events on campus.

Whether it is the beginning of the first week of school, or just another Friday, there are always exciting events on campus that students look forward to. ^{whether} Whether it is a start of the year concert, games and activities near the lawn at [redacted] or Wednesday [redacted] concerts, plenty of students have an opportunity to relax and take it easy at those events.

However, these events that many [redacted] students attend do not just spontaneously occur. Everything that happens is due to an on campus organization that plans, coordinates and orchestrates all of these events and that organization is called the [redacted].

[redacted] also known as [redacted]

According to the [redacted] home webpage, "ever since 1986, [redacted] has been bringing quality entertainment such as concerts, films, lectures, special events to the [redacted] campus community." (www [redacted])

When it comes to

For many events that go on around campus, not everything is done automatically. These students have to go above and beyond in order to get the job done. When it comes to planning such extravagant events, the typical procedure is hectic. [redacted] must schedule live entertainment sometimes months in advance. They have to design posters and put them all around campus for advertising, order canopies and tables so vendors can sell products, hire outside workers to put stages together and hire cleaning crews to clean the campus afterwards.

Helpful  
details

All this strenuous work takes countless weeks and sometimes months to put together and in the midst of planning for an upcoming event, I got first hand experience of the work that goes on at the [redacted] office, and how through all of this work, [redacted] puts on great shows.

At 3:00 pm last Wednesday ^{midweek} when I dropped by the [redacted] office to talk with [redacted] one of the heads of [redacted] and get a feel for all of the work that goes on. As I walked in the office, it was shocking. There were more students inside the office working ^{I was shocked (viva)} than there was space. Once I was accustomed to the crowd, I began to look around. The room was completely white with blue and yellow [redacted] banners nicely ^{planned (viva)} decorated. I was browsing the posters on the old brown table and saw all of the variety of posters ASPB makes. Some of the posters included Wednesday [redacted] concert series, information on studying abroad and dance performances being held. As I was reading the posters, some of the students walked past me and took some of the posters to display around campus. Towards the back of the office, students working on projects occupied all of the Mac computers. The white board, next to the printers had writing all over. The board had names of projects and deadlines, but also to do lists that must be completed.

While looking around, I got a tap on my shoulder. As I turned around, ^{I saw (viva)} it was a girl who was part of [redacted]. She was relatively tall and thin with light brown skin. She had on blue jeans

and wore a blue [redacted] shirt with a [redacted] bracelet. She had on earphones, but took one out and asked, "Are you [redacted]?"

"Yes I am. Are you [redacted]?" I asked.

She nodded. [redacted] is the current vice chairperson for [redacted], responsible for looking over all of the boards. After our brief introduction, [redacted] took me on a tour of the [redacted] office where I saw all of the work the students do. While walking, [redacted] gave a brief overview of the entire [redacted] office. She explained ^{that (was)} how this office was where four important [redacted] boards work when it comes to concerts and school activities.

"Is there a current event you are all working on right now?" I asked.

"As a matter of fact, we are working on [redacted]. It is an upcoming event around mid-November."

While touring the office, I was able to get a perspective of some of the different boards. As I observed the people working in the Marketing section, ^{here (is)} there were a few students on the phone calling potential clients about getting some publicity. The other students were on the computer, creating posters to publicize for the [redacted].

After getting an overview of the [redacted] office, [redacted] and I went back to her desk and she gave me more information.

"How long did it take to plan [redacted]?" I asked.

"We are still in the process of planning. When planning events, things can change up to the day of, even an hour before show time. We have been planning [redacted] probably since mid-September. [redacted] has to first get applications available as early as possible so people can perform if they want. We also have to get banners made, the people on the Concerts board has to get a skit ready so they know what they will talk about. We need some clubs to have

*Chair of Marketing (she was)*

stands where they can sell merchandise as well as [redacted] merchandise. And we have to get food, so that people who attend [redacted] have something to eat," [redacted] said.

As we walked back towards the entrance, the room was occupied with many more students. Some [redacted] members were on the phone talking with others about upcoming events. A boy from the advertising board ^{had} brought in "prototype" merchandise to sell, while other [redacted] members were still working on posters on the computers. As I was walking, I saw two members from the board of concerts rehearse written dialogue, while the receptionist was typing up information about [redacted].

Good.  
Helpful  
details.

According to [redacted] even though the job is tough, they want their peers to have fun at [redacted] and get well oriented. "It's a great way for all of us to be together," [redacted] summed up. The ultimate goal is for incoming students and graduating seniors to have a fantastic four years when it comes to having fond memories of the types of activities they experienced.

For us who go to these events who are not part of [redacted] the time we have is fun because we just relax and enjoy our time. However, ^(u) for the people on [redacted] they should be admired and get recognition because they put in a lot of time and effort in making every single event whether it is a concert or other campus activities fun. It is 3:30 in the afternoon and as I take my last look at the [redacted] office, I see an office full of dedicated individuals working hard in orchestrating an event we will all have fun at.

Valuable  
part.

**Notes**

Your added details are effective & add energy to your depiction. This is an interesting & informative profile. Organization is coherent and development is effective. All it needs is a bit more editing. There are a few surface grammar mistakes. Try to avoid the shifts in voice -- they are a little distracting.

A-



### **Essay #3**

**Write an essay about a concept that interests you and that you want to study further. When you have a good understanding of the concept, explain it to your readers, considering carefully what they already know about it and how your essay might add to what they know.**

**Carefully read *Elements of Writing* to review the features that make this kind of essay effective. Consult for suggestions as to how you can come up with ideas, plan, draft, and revise your essay.**

**This essay needs to be at least three pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 3. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 7. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to *MyWork* in order for you to receive credit for the assignment.**

(3)

7 November 2011

The Truth About Obesity

Good short

Of the seven billion people on Earth, more than one billion people are obese. Of the nearly thirty-percent of obese people, we all know someone who is obese because they are a family member, friend or co-worker. Unfortunately, due to this disease, every year, nearly 450 thousand people die. However ^{in (w)} ~~based off of~~ ^{our} our society today, many of us judge ^{them} ~~them~~ ^{upon (worse)} based off of what we see. When we see an obese person, ^{him (as)} twice ^{our?} their body size walking down the street, we always make snap decisions about ^{him (as)} them. Either they are lazy, can't manage what they eat, or that they just don't care about their health and life. ^{valid (w)} However, there are more in-depth reasons why nearly thirty percent of the world's population is obese. When it comes to obesity, some ^{Factors (w)} spectrums to take into consideration are the genetic, ^s physiological and ^y psychological ^y factors.

According to Jerry Gillman, obesity is "the result of an energy imbalance in the body caused by consuming more calories than necessary for energy required." ^{(good) quote.} The most scientific reason linked to obesity is genetics. Genetics is a major determining factor in obesity, mostly because ^{people to it (exact)} it is predisposed. For example, "if your biological mother is heavy as an adult, there is approximately a seventy-five percent chance that you will be heavy." ^{Helpful example.} ("Healthy Eating and Diet"). Basically, when the ^{wc} offspring is determining the genetic makeup, the obesity gene has a stronger dominance, and thus acts upon that trait. However, if the lifestyle of an individual is good, the obesity gene sometimes does not get acted upon. However, those chances are slim, and typically individuals with the obesity gene tend to become obese. With this, the body tends to

store more than a usual amount of fat. ^{The} ~~With~~ a vast accumulation of fat stored, ~~it~~ ^w contributes to unhealthy weight gain. Genes are also very manipulative because they can subconsciously make obese people start eating again. According to "The Real Cause of Obesity" when "the unconscious drive to eat is stimulated [it] acts to return weight to starting point." Because of genetics, some obese people don't have an appetite, but the function of the bodies can make them eat anyways. The function of genetics proves that obesity is not a personal choice, but rather a predisposed factor.

Helpful explanation

Of the many factors linked to obesity, the physiological factors are barely heard of, but play an important role ^w in obesity. A leading type of physiological factor is the chemical imbalance in the body. According to "The Real Cause of Obesity," "the hormone leptin is made by fat tissue and sends a signal informing the brain that there are adequate stores of energy."

When it comes to obese patients, their body has either an absence of leptin, or lack of producing sufficient amounts. ^{inability to} ^(exact) A lack of "leptin hormone" in the body makes these people "ravenously hungry all the time." The result is that with an insufficient amount of "leptin hormone" the obese people binge eat to satisfy themselves, which basically means, no matter how much the body signals the person to stop, they continue to eat in order to achieve this chemical satisfaction.

explanation

Although chemical imbalance is a component in obesity, another aspect causing obesity is the development of the brain. According to Willow Lawson, "these three points of the body ["hypothalamus, adrenal gland and pituitary gland"] work together to maintain chemical equilibrium when the body is under stress.... The problem is ^a cortisol [stress hormone] prompts the body to deposit fat around the abdomen." When the "hypothalamus, adrenal gland and pituitary gland" do not function and coordinate together, it takes a serious toll on the body. When the brain cannot synthesize the "cortisol" chemical, the body goes awry. An excessive amount of

Better about (oh)

little consistency

Does cortisol add 24h or prevent it? (oh)

fat is stored in the empty cavities and spaces in the body, resulting in visceral fat. The physiology of the body is an important factor because when the chemicals in the brain and the brain itself do not work properly, it creates havoc because the obese person's body does not cooperate and maintain homeostasis. Obesity is caused ^{often} ^{by (mixed)} based on the physiology of the body because when the body doesn't function properly, it creates a ^{exact} horrible outcome.

A final factor linked to obesity is the psychological factor. For many years, the psychology of obesity has been severely overlooked because many never linked obesity to the psychological state of an individual. However, in-depth research proves that for some people, obesity began with some sort of psychological distress. It's not shocking that consuming food makes obese people comfortable. Eating is very blissful because ^(it) they get a rush which makes them satisfied. According to Jerry Gillman however, "many people eat in response to negative emotions such as boredom, sadness and anger." While for some, eating is due to the negativity going on in life, for others, it is due to a lack of self-esteem. Many eat [?] their feelings because the satisfaction of eating comforts any negative thoughts they have ^{about} on themselves. These types of obese people are labeled "emotional eaters." Whenever horrible events occur, whether ^{they} ^(as) it deal with family, jobs or relationships, they eat as a way to express their emotions. Eating, for obese people is a type of therapy, because food assures them that everything will be alright. Besides using food as an outlet for comfort, "social factors" are another ^{factor} underrated aspect linked to obesity. According to a study by Phillip Goldblatt, Mary Moore and Albert Stunkard, there are a few "social factors" which influences why men and women are obese. For obese women, part of the problem ^{is} ^{is} that they all had low "socioeconomic status" meaning they ^{have} had unstable income. Many did not have enough money to live off of. When it came to "social mobility" it meant these women had "low social status in their community," meaning they had no friends to

(good)  
clear  
explanation.

) sense

turn to and confide with. For the men, the results were very similar. Men of low "socioeconomic status" tended not to have as much money as the average man. When it came to "social mobility," the men did not belong to "the social classes in their community" and had weak relationships with family and friends (Goldblatt 59-61). "Social factors" such as the ones mentioned easily explain why some men and women are obese. For them psychologically, they had nothing. Not only did they not have money for financial security; they did not have friends to socialize with or healthy relationships with others.

Besides "social factors" another psychological factor contributing to obesity is body image. Manifestation of body image disturbance ^{new verb (verb)} into three areas: view of the self, self-consciousness in general and self-consciousness in relation to opposite sex," (Goldblatt 41). Body image is tough to handle for obese patients because they just constantly point out their imperfections and harshly criticize themselves. Slowly by slowly, they become more insecure with themselves and enter ^a ~~a type of~~ ^{depression} state because they dislike their physical appearance and everything about themselves. When depressed with their body image, the usual solution many turn to is food because it comforts them from all the negative emotions they feel. The psychological factor of obesity is the toughest aspect of obesity because an obese patients psyche is very fragile, and they are just stuck in a dangerous, depressive downward cycle.

Our society makes assumptions about obese people, but they never take into consideration some factors, which have a major role when it comes to obesity. On lookers ^{rarely?} never contemplate the fact that a person's obesity might be genetic and that they are unfortunately predisposed to a complicated lifestyle. Also, people do not fathom the idea that an obese person's physiology functions ^{from that of (verb)} different than the average human, which results in atypical changes such as excess fat deposits throughout the body. Most importantly however, some

Helpful transitions

Clear explanation

people do not pay attention to the psychological pressures that go on in our society such as self-esteem and insecurity, which leads people to eat to feel comfortable. Obesity is not a lifestyle choice where people choose to be lazy and not care about their health and lifestyle. Even though obesity, which affects thirty percent of the world's population, is a serious medical epidemic occurring today, it still does not give out society the right to pass judgment on people's health without knowing the underlying truth.

Clear  
+  
Focused  
conclusion.

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[Redacted]

Very interesting, & relevant topic here. Development and unity are both very effective. Your basic organization is also quite coherent. What keeps this from being first rate is the frequency of word choice related problems (exact word choice, wordiness) and other grammar concerns (agreement, pronoun reference, incomplete constructions). Lets keep working on these.

(B+)

#### **Essay #4**

**“Exploring Life at the Limits” – Choose one theme or concept that has emerged from our reading and discussion of Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* and write an essay in which you help your reader to arrive at a fuller and deeper understanding of it. Use whatever combination of writing strategies you judge to be most effective. Be sure to incorporate development from your own observation and experience.**

**To aid you in developing your reflections, you are required to make significant use of *Into the Wild*. Provide thoughtfully chosen examples and quotations that logically develop your points. Make use of at least one additional source. Be sure to cite all sources according to the MLA style. This essay needs to be approximately five pages long. A draft is due on Wednesday, November 16. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 21. In order to receive credit for your assignment, an E-copy must be posted on MyWork.**



21 November 2011

### Success in Disguise

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook is considered successful because he has money, fame and fortune, right? And anyone who does not have money, fame or fortune is considered failures, true? In today's mainstream society, that is what we use to determine if someone is a success or a failure. However, in some instances, the typical assumptions of success and failure can be wrong. In Jon Krakauer's Into the Wild, the main character Chris McCandless right off the bat would be considered a failure because he died on his journey to Alaska. However, those assumptions would be wrong because ^{(why) success (aim)} for the reasons Chris chose to go to Alaska, he succeeded. The reasons ^(why) Chris went to Alaska was to live a real life in the wild, find spiritual freedom and reach his ultimate goals of happiness. Common sense would reason that McCandless was arrogant and crazy, but the fact that Chris was able to accomplish his goal and finish what he set out to do proves that his tragic journey was indeed a successful one.

Before going on his epic journey, McCandless lived what ^(his) was considered a false life because his life revolved around doing things for his parent's satisfaction. A conflict between Billie and Walt McCandless and Chris began because the parents and Chris had different definitions of success. For Billie and Walt, success was seeing their son go to college and law school and earn money. On the contrary, Chris never viewed success in terms of money but rather living life to the fullest. For instance, when it was time for college, originally Chris did not want to go because he did not want to waste his life committing to something he did not want for

Nice start

Good.

Nice

clear explanation

here.

conclude  
point

himself. However, his parents tried to show Chris that education was important. And so, "[Chris] ended up going to Emory [University], even though he thought it was pointless, a waste of time and money" (Krakauer 114). From a young age, Chris' parents guided him into which direction to follow and they tried to make him realize that educating himself would make him happier. In one instance, Chris parents had said that Chris should go as far as "getting a law degree" in order to achieve and succeed in life (Krakauer 114). McCandless lived a false life because his parents basically planned his life and he had no choice in the matter. Many students, such as I can relate to the false life that Chris lived. For instance, my parents tried to do the same with me, that Billie and Walt did to Chris. They told me what to study, what goals to aim for and how to live my life. This situation is similar to Chris because even though parents try to protect you and help you, sometimes they just take control of our lives and we never establish independence.

word quite.

How did this express their model of success?

However, since Chris did not want his life controlled, once he finished college, he set out on the road and started living a real life by not letting anyone control him. An example of Chris living a real life was when he traveled down the Colorado River to reach the Gulf of California. When traveling to get to the Gulf of California, people use planes or cars, but Chris traveled by using a canoe he found. Chris "noticed a secondhand aluminum canoe for sale and on an impulse decided to buy it and paddle down the Colorado River," (Krakauer 32). Chris was living a real life because nothing was holding him back and he got to live the way he wanted. Even though his canoeing adventure was a failure since he got lost, for Chris the fact that he made a decision and went through with it was a success because he got to decide on his own fate and learn from it. In a letter he wrote to Wayne Westerberg, McCandless mentioned that, "the freedom and simple beauty of it [nature] is just too good to pass up," (Krakauer 33). Common sense would lead us to believe that Chris was foolish and crazy because he gave up a stable life to become a

real example.

what does he see in a canoe that he would have missed in an airplane or car?

word quite.

drifter who could not even survive in nature, and a failure because he gave up everything. However, those conclusions would be wrong because Chris did succeed by living a real life, which is what he wanted for a while. Out in the wild, no one controlled Chris and he was in charge of his own life and fate. ~~By~~ ^{and} going on an epic journey, living a life the way he wanted did it prove that Chris' journey to Alaska was a success because he finally got independence.

(clear explanation)

Wanting to get away from a materialistic society and just have freedom in the wild was another reason why McCandless went on his journey. Chris viewed money and materialism as pointless because they had no meaning and value, and yet many people desired ^{them (as)} it. On his journey, Chris established freedom by leaving all his possessions behind because he found it thrilling, but also freedom could not be achieved without making risks. For instance, when Chris got rid of all his possessions, "he buried his Winchester deer-hunting rifle and a few other possessions that he might one day want to recover. Then, in a gesture that would have done both Thoreau and Tolstoy proud, he arranged all his paper currency in a pile on the sand—a pathetic little stacks of ones and fives and twenties—and put a match to it," (Krakauer 29). By disregarding all his belongings, Chris somewhat achieved freedom because nothing held him back.

(good example of quotation)

^{Because (lost)}  
However, even though burning his possessions gave McCandless freedom, he felt spiritually free when he lived independently in the wild. For instance, when Chris made it to the Stampede Trail, he wrote on a ply board, "two years he walks the earth. No phone, no pool, no pets, no cigarettes. Ultimate freedom. An extremist. An aesthetic voyager whose home is the road. Escaped from Atlanta. Thou shalt not return cause "the west is the best".... The climactic battle to kill the false being within and victoriously conclude the spiritual revolution." (Krakauer 163). Words from McCandless himself show that being in Alaska, did he find ultimate freedom

(good quote)

because he was where he wanted to be and no one could take him away from the wild.

McCandless ^{succeeded} achieved because he was able to spiritually renovate and free himself from society

by going into the wild. Common sense would lead us to believe that Chris' journey to Alaska to

find ultimate freedom was a failure because he died in the place where he found his spiritual freedom, and the fact that living in nature was the thing that killed him. However, this conclusion is wrong because Chris' journey to find ultimate and spiritual freedom was a success because in

the wild, he got to renovate his life and erase the false being inside him. According to Hornsberger, "you must ultimately decide within yourself how bad you want to be free before you die." Hornsberger's idea relates to Chris because he decided he wanted spiritual freedom and he found it. Even though McCandless died, he succeeded because of the fact he was able to live a completely new life in Alaska away from a society he did not like.

Besides wanting to renovate his life, there was a particular goal McCandless had, so he ventured to Alaska to find it. According to Timothy Pynchyl, when someone has a goal, it is because it means something to him or her and it is "meaningful" and creates "positive emotions."

For McCandless, his ultimate goal was to find happiness. His old life did not provide the kind of happiness he wanted, and so he tried to find it. The freedom of the outdoors made Chris really

happy because life was to be enjoyed, and he enjoyed it the most when outdoors. Chris' happiness was compared to young artist Stephan Dedalus because like Chris, Dedalus "was

unheeded happy and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and willful and wild hearted)" (Krakauer 31). Jan Burres, one of Chris' friends from Oregon found Chris barely

surviving off of berries, being in the wild just brought some light and happiness to him. Like

Dedalus, when an individual is in their niche, they reach a state of complete exhilaration.

Miller takes  
Chris

Clear explanation

Goal  
Goal  
Goal  
Goal  
Goal

Goal  
This works better for

When Chris wrote a letter to his friend Ronald Franz, he explained how the little things in life make people ecstatic. For example, he explained that the "Basic core of a man's living spirit in his passion for adventure... You are wrong if you think Joy emanates only or principally from human relationships. God has placed it around us. It is in everything and anything we might experience. We just have to have the courage to turn against our habitual lifestyle and engage in unconventional living," (Krakauer 57). What Chris wrote to Ronald Franz summarized why he took this adventure. Happiness is all around us, and finding that happiness is to experience new dimension of life. Typical society viewed Chris' decision to journey to Alaska as a failure. The man knew nothing about nature or the Alaskan territory, but he chose to live there. However, they are wrong to think that his journey was a failure. As Timothy Pynchon said, when we have a goal we achieve it. Chris' goal was to find happiness throughout his journey and through his two-year adventure; Chris found happiness because he did something extraordinary with his life.

Essential quote.

According to Krakauer, "McCandless's beliefs, a challenge in which a successful outcome is assured is not a challenge at all," (182). Chris' search to find happiness was a success because even though the journey was a challenge, he was determined to overcome his obstacle to find happiness in the wild, which he did. Chris' method of achieving his goal sometimes proves common sense as not true because even though McCandless died, being one with nature made him happy.

What evidence suggests that Chris was right that even at the end?

Common sense would consider Chris McCandless' two-year journey to Alaska as a failure because he died. He made it to the wild and lived there, but never came back. However, this assumption is wrong because Chris did succeed in his journey. Chris went on this journey to rediscover himself, but also to live a real life, find spiritual freedom and reach his goal of happiness. Granted that he died, but Chris was able to conquer everything he set out to do, which

Clear explanation

is defined as success. The serene ambiance of nature and the peacefulness is what Chris wanted and after two years, he found it. His journey is a success in disguise because even though he suffered at times, the wild finally brought him at peace.

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Krakauer, Jon *Into the Wild* First Anchor Books, 1996. Print

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Good



Your development here is strong & unified. Nice work.  
Your examples are specific and supplemented with well chosen  
quotations. And you show a strong grasp of the reading.  
And your other sources are much more effectively integrated  
here than they were in your previous draft.

A-

Perspective #1 – The University’s Rubric

Table 4

*Kevin’s Essay Scores by Three Readers*

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University entrance exam	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3	Essay #4
<b>10</b>	1 st Rdr - 5	1 st Rdr - 5	1 st Rdr - 4	1 st Rdr - 5
	2 nd Rdr - 4	2 nd Rdr - 5	2 nd Rdr - 4	2 nd Rdr - 4
	3 rd Rdr - 4	3 rd Rdr - 5	3 rd Rdr - 4	3 rd Rdr - 5
	<b>Avg - 4.0</b>	<b>Avg - 5.0</b>	<b>Avg - 4.0</b>	<b>Avg - 4.6</b>

---

*Note:* Scoring based on a 6-point scale and scores in bold are the averaged scores of all three readers; “Rdr” stands for Reader; “Avg” stand for Average

As indicated in Chapter 2, before freshman students at SW University are placed in an English class, they must take the university’s writing exam. The exam is measured against a six-point rubric (see Table 2) by two readers independently, and papers for which the scores are more than two points apart are then scored by a third reader. Papers with a composite score of eight or better are considered passing.



As the researcher, I had access to Kevin's entrance writing exam with no input other than the final score. Kevin received a 10 on the entrance essay exam. As seen in Table 4, from my perspective and that of both the second and third reader, he clearly answered the prompt and wrote in a highly organized manner with a clear line of thinking. Within his text, he referenced three other literature works, The Scarlett Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne, A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah, and Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, to illustrate connections to the exam passage. He reiterated his argument specifically and tied it back to the prompt in his final paragraph. Kevin exhibited a familiarity with essay organization befitting to a college level writer. He had been considered by the university to be prepared to enter the college writing community.

As indicated in Table 4, Kevin's Essay #1 addressed the prompt in a satisfactory manner according to all three readers using the *SW University 6 Point Writing Rubric* (see Table 2). He narrated an event that had happened to him as a young boy. There were specific details, appropriate dialogue and logical reflections in the end, however, several grammar errors. Reader #2's comment was that this essay "followed the prompt, but there were too many errors to warrant a higher score. I gave Essay #1 as score of 5. The second and third reader both gave him a score of 4.

Essay #2 prompt asked for a profile of a person, group, or event. As Table 4 shows, this essay received the same score, a 5, from all three readers. It was "clearly competent" and used "appropriate examples and sensible reasoning." While there were a

couple grammar errors, overall he was able to “choose words accurately, vary sentences effectively, and observe the conventions of written English.”

Essay #3 received a score of 4 from each of the readers as shown in Table 4. The topic for this essay was obesity and its contributing factors. He used appropriate quotes and explanations to define his topic. While his response was “satisfactory,” and had “acceptable reasoning,” it contained several word choice and grammar errors. It was possible that this essay, requiring the explanation of a concept, a different type of writing than the previous two essays which were more narrative in nature, may have contributed to Kevin’s difficulty with word choice and wordiness as he dealt with what may have been an unfamiliar topic as it required research.

Essay #4, similar to Essay #2, had high scores. I gave it a score of 5, the second reader gave it a 4, and the third reader gave it a 5. This essay was a competent and well supported response to the prompt asking the writer to identify a theme from the novel they had read, though not fluent or insightful enough to score a 6. This essay was coherently written, focused on one topic, and included an in depth explanation of a group of students that promoted student activities at a university, all requirements that Dr. Jackson had discussed in class. All four of Kevin’s essays evidenced his competence at crafting a written product to appropriately address a prompt, supporting with specifics the claims that he made, and providing the reader with sufficient detail to create a clear

picture of the topic. According to the university rubric, Kevin demonstrated a level of competence in line with college level expectations.

Perspective #2– The Instructor’s Rubric

Table 5

*Dr. Jackson’s proofreading marks on Kevin’s Essays*

Proof reading mark/symbol	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3	Essay #4
✓	14	2	0	1
☆	3	3	0	0
_____	5	7	33	32
=====	0	1	1	9
□	1	6	9	3
~~~~~ (squiggly line under word(s))	0	2	4	0
Agr	0	0	2	1
Coh	0	0	2	1
Comp	0	0	0	0
CS	0	1	0	0
Dev	1	0	0	0
Dig	0	0	0	0

Exact	0	0	3	0
Frag	0	0	1	0
Lc	0	0	0	0
Logic	0	0	0	1
Mixed	0	1	1	0
Num	0	0	0	0
Ref	0	0	2	0
Shift	1	0	0	1
T	2	0	1	0
Trans	0	0	0	0
Usage	0	1	1	1
Voice	0	2	0	0
W	2	1	3	1
Wc	3	1	4	0
Ww	0	0	0	0

In Kevin's first essay, a narrative, almost all of the Dr. Jackson's comments were positive. The first complemented Kevin on the title choice, and subsequent comments included "nice details," "effective narrative details," "good dialogue," "nice transition," ending with "appropriate and logical reflections." I suggest that Dr. Jackson's use of positive words (nice, effective, good, appropriate, logical) indicated that Kevin's writing

was apparently in line with Dr. Jackson's expectations for college level writing. In addition to the proof reading marks, once the instructor wrote a word above the one with a squiggly line underneath and mark (wc) indicating the need for a better word choice.

On days like those, children would play outside, climb trees, ride bikes, play
Enjoy(wc)
soccer and do other typical activities.

One other time, he simply crossed out the word and wrote a new one over it along with (wc), and another time he circled the word, and wrote the new one over it along with a (wc). In another sentence, he simply replaced the word without using the proofreading mark.

watch
...I thought maybe my sister could look over me ...

Twice Dr. Jackson added a comma without any remarks. It wasn't until the final paragraph that he made significant changes in wording even though both the underlining, which indicated evidence of significance, and the side comment were positive.

It is ^{un}fortunate that the driver responsible for what occurred never was caught.
~~As an adult,~~ she did not act like a mature ^{adult} ~~one~~ because she ran away from being liable for
her decisions. However, this occurrence ^{d (+)} has been eye opening for me because I learned
something the reckless driver ^{failed (uc) ^} lacked to learn. I understand ^{that I must} to take responsibility for my
actions, no matter how severe they are and to deal with the consequences. It is a ^{bit of} ~~little~~
cliché because it almost took me being hit by a car to learn that no matter how old you
^{you must (sh+t)} are, be responsible for the decisions you make and be careful when it comes to driving.

Appropriate
&
logical
reflections

The final comments indicated Kevin had done a good job of narrating using descriptive details and appropriate reflections, which were both expectations Dr. Jackson had explicitly set up in class (see Chapter 3). His recognition of Kevin’s competent use of these narrative characteristics served to reinforce Kevin’s role as a budding member of this community. His only caution was to encourage Kevin to edit for verb tenses and word choice, which appeared to now be secondary concerns for Kevin in his writing, not primary. The final grade was a B, which further reinforced Kevin’s ability to meet Freshman Composition expectations.

The prompt for Essay #2 asked for a profile of a person, group, place, or activity. Kevin chose to profile an on campus group responsible for planning and advertising campus events. Again, all through the essay Dr Jackson wrote positive remarks: “good start,” “good point,” “appropriate quote,” “helpful details,” “clear and informative

interview.” There was one squiggly line under “decorated,” with “placed” written above and a (wc), and “for” crossed out with no word written on top with a (w) next to it. In four other instances, the instructor crossed out a word or a phrase and replaced it with another without adding a proofreading remark. Also, two shifts in what Dr. Jackson called voice were marked:

I was shocked (voice)
As I walked in the office, it was shocking.

I saw (voice)
As I turned around, it was a girl who was part of XXXX.

These shifts were identified at the end of the essay as being “a little distracting,” but Dr. Jackson came alongside him as the counselor and guide, fixing the distractions for him and showing him examples of acceptable discourse for this community. These words, given to him by Dr. Jackson, served to help Kevin continue to move closer to full membership in this writing community. Other than the mention of needing “a bit” more editing and a few grammar “glitches,” the comments at the end of the essay were positive in reference to Kevin’s use of detail to add energy and interest to his writing, and his use of effective coherence and development throughout. Essay #2’s grade was an A-.

As indicated earlier, Essay #3 was about defining a concept and Kevin chose the topic of obesity. This type of writing was a shift from the previous genres, which were more narrative in nature. Dr. Jackson had mentioned in an interview (see Chapter 3) that this type of writing, the defining of a concept, tended to be more difficult for students as

it was a shift from the familiar narrative genre to a more research-based genre, and may not have been as familiar to freshmen students; however, Kevin appeared able to meet the demands of this genre as his essay grade was a B+.

Kevin's topic, unity and development were "both very effective" according to Dr. Jackson's final comments, which were characteristics that had been mentioned in class when the concept essay had been introduced. Kevin's meeting of these criteria was further evidence of his willingness to listen to and comply with Dr. Jackson's expectations, yet he did have some problems with word choice, wordiness and grammar, which kept him from receiving a higher grade.

Similar to the first two essays, the side comments were predominantly positive: good start, good quote, helpful example, helpful explanation, good clear explanation, helpful transition, and clear and focused conclusion, which all referenced Kevin's handling of the content and structure of this essay. However, in the first paragraph, Dr. Jackson made several editing corrections, crossing off words, giving Kevin other word choices, and using proofreading marks.

Of the seven billion people on Earth, more than one billion people are obese. Of the nearly thirty-percent of obese people, we all know someone who is obese because they are a family member, friend or co-worker. Unfortunately, due to this disease, every year, nearly 450 thousand people die. However ~~based off of~~ ^{in (w)} our society today, many of us judge ~~them~~ ^{others (ref)} ~~based off~~ ^{up to (usage)} of what we see. When we see an obese person, ~~twice their~~ ^{him (agr)} body size walking down the street, we always make snap decisions about ~~them~~. Either they are lazy, can't manage what they eat, or that they just don't care about their health and life. However, there are more in-depth reasons why nearly thirty percent of the world's population is obese. When it comes to obesity, some ~~factors~~ ^(wc) spectrums to take into consideration are the genetic, physiological and psychological factors.

There were two corrections in reference to ineffective word choice (wc), one of wordiness (w), one of error in pronoun reference (ref), one of incorrect word choice (usage), one of error in pronoun agreement (agr), and at the end of paragraph, some corrections where Dr. Jackson crossed out parts of words and wrote in the correct usage without putting in proofreading marks. Essay #3 had more proofreading marks (24) than either Essay #1 (9) or Essay #2 (9) and I suggest Kevin's struggles related to Essay #3 being expository with possible unfamiliar vocabulary and definitions.

Throughout the essay, there were paragraphs that combined multiple positive and corrective marks. In the following paragraph, sentences and phrases were underlined and words boxed to indicate significant and specific details, while words were crossed out and the corrections written above, with a positive comment written on the side.

Besides "social factors" another psychological factor contributing to obesity is body image. ^{new verb (from)} "Manifestation of body image disturbance... into three areas: view of the self, self-consciousness in general and self-consciousness in relation to opposite sex," (Goldblatt 41). Body image is tough to handle for obese patients because they just constantly point out their imperfections and harshly criticize themselves. Slowly by slowly, they become more insecure with themselves and enter ^a ~~a type of~~ ^{we} depression state because they dislike their physical appearance and everything about themselves. When depressed with their body image, the usual solution many turn to is food because it comforts them from all the negative emotions they feel. The psychological factor of obesity is the toughest aspect of obesity because an obese patients psyche is very fragile, and they are just stuck in a dangerous, depressive downward cycle.

Handwritten notes:
Habit transition
Clear explanation

Notably, in the final paragraph, Dr. Jackson's made only two editing marks and finished the essay with a positive comment: "clear and focused conclusion."

Our society makes assumptions about obese people, but they never take into consideration some factors, which have a major role when it comes to obesity. On lookers ^{early?} ~~never~~ contemplate the fact that a person's obesity might be genetic and that they are unfortunately predisposed to a complicated lifestyle. Also, people do not fathom the idea that an obese person's physiology functions ^{from that of (us)} different than the average human, which results in atypical changes such as excess fat deposits throughout the body. Most importantly however, some

people do not pay attention to the psychological pressures that go on in our society such as self-esteem and insecurity, which leads people to eat to feel comfortable. Obesity is not a lifestyle choice where people choose to be lazy and not care about their health and lifestyle. Even though obesity, which affects thirty percent of the world's population, is a serious medical epidemic occurring today, it still does not give out society the right to pass judgment on people's health without knowing the underlying truth.

Clear
or
Sound
Conclusion.

Dr. Jackson's final comments -- "interesting and relevant," "very effective," "quite coherent" -- all served to confirm Kevin's progress as a writer. Another indication of Kevin's meeting Dr. Jackson's expectations was the promise of the potential of this essay being "first rate," once the word choice and grammar problems were addressed. Similar to what he wrote in Essay #1's final comments, Dr. Jackson's offer of access was again extended with the inclusive pronoun of *let's* when he wrote "Let's keep working on these (*the word choice and grammar issues*). As previously mentioned, Kevin had more errors in Essay #3 than in Essay #2, yet received a higher grade, B+ as opposed to a B. I would suggest that this was due to Dr. Jackson's recognition of Kevin's ability to write to a more complex prompt and so was more forgiving of grammar errors. This may have also been Dr. Jackson's recognition and anticipation of Kevin's active participation in office visits where grammar issues could be addressed further.

Kevin's Essay #4 was another indication of his success at meeting the instructor's expectations as well as Dr. Jackson's moving him along the path of toward college writing. The prompt asked for the identification of the theme of Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer with support from the novel and at least one other source. In Kevin's essay

there were 32 underlines indicating significance of the piece and, again, positive comments along the sides. There were questions asking for more explanation, such as “How did this express their model of success?”, “What does he see in a canoe that he would have missed in an airplane or car?” and “What evidence suggests that Chris was fulfilled even at the end?” but the instructor appeared to not count off for this lack of development as Kevin received an A- on this paper. I suggest that Dr. Jackson, in recognition of Kevin’s increasing potential as a college writer and willingness to participate in the community practices, did not take him to task for every misstep he made in his essay and was allowing Kevin some leeway as he continued to evolve as a writer. Rather than criticize Kevin as a learner, Dr. Jackson functioned as a counselor and served to push Kevin to a higher level of writing. However, similar to the previous essays, there were instances in which Dr. Jackson crossed out a word or phrase and added a different one above and added some commas. In the second half of the essay, there were no longer any proof reading marks or corrections, and the final remarks mentioned his development to be “strong and unified,” the examples “specific and supplemented with well chosen quotations.” Dr. Jackson also made reference to Kevin’s previous draft of Essay #4 and wrote that this final draft did a better job of integrating his additional sources.

As each essay was graded, Dr. Jackson appeared to move more in the direction of a counselor to Kevin, encouraging rather than correcting. Both Kevin and Dr. Jackson offered legitimacy to the other, as Kevin recognized Dr. Jackson’s role as the authority

and Dr. Jackson continued to guide Kevin along the path of college writing, giving him a “way of being” in this community.

Perspective #3 – Writing as a Member of the College Community

Kevin entered this new community with a certain level of self-confidence, which apparently allowed him to participate and engage comfortably in the practices of Freshman Composition 1. He sat in front, remained attentive to Dr. Jackson, and took advantage of the invitation to talk privately with Dr. Jackson during office hours. Kevin did not bring a laptop to class, but instead had the textbook, notebook, and pen out on his desk throughout the class. He did not miss any classes, nor was he ever late or excuse himself early. I would argue that Kevin’s growing comfort in this community was at least fostered by his being granted legitimacy early on by Dr. Jackson, both in class and in written feedback on his paper, as well as Kevin’s view of Dr. Jackson as an authority, therefore legitimizing Dr. Jackson’s role as the instructor.

In reference to Essay #1, Kevin told me that he was concerned whether Dr. Jackson would “like the paper or not,” an indication early on that Kevin recognized Dr. Jackson’s authority to make judgments on student work and was concerned about instructor approval. At the end of our first interview, Kevin’s evaluation of Dr. Jackson was, “The first day I thought he was going to be...but he’s actually a really nice professor.” Kevin did not explain what his initial thoughts might have been, but they seem implicitly to be in contrast to “really nice.” Kevin’s recognition of Dr. Jackson’s role as the expert played out in his response to Dr. Jackson’s invitation to his office hours

for help. Kevin had picked up on the routine of office hours, and the feedback and conversations during these visits appeared to directly influence Kevin's writing. As the class went on, Kevin began to feel more and more comfortable with talking to the professor and shared his feelings about these office visits.

K: Well, uhhh...well first I went to office hours because he said like... he said the first day of school that's he's there to help so I just... well, he is there to help so you might as well just go.

R: [right]

K: And so he was very like specific. He told he didn't like this, he liked that. If I did this he'd be more inclined to like better grade it so he was very specific on what he was expecting and I just kinda did what he said.

In the second interview, Kevin again commented on the benefits of the office visits. "I go there before every essay is due. I always go now, just to have his opinion and it's working...I am getting more comfortable in talking to the professor."

Kevin, himself, gained legitimacy as a college writer when Dr. Jackson read sections of his Essay #1 draft and commented positively on it in class: "This is a great draft...a wonderful draft." After Dr. Jackson read and complimented the draft, he also suggested some changes: "This writer spent a lot of time narrating my essay...but could

maybe some of that be cut?" Kevin, seeming to accept Dr. Jackson as the authority, took his draft and made the suggested revisions:

R: He was talking a lot about changing the focus. Are you going to?

K: I already did.

R: You did really? ...did you change your focus because he told you to or because you think it was a good idea?

K: I did it because he told me to. I feel that since he is the professor he does know what he's talking about so...

Kevin also mentioned a reluctance to revise; however, since revision was suggested by Dr. Jackson, he did it anyway.

I was descriptive about when I talked to my mom about riding my bike and stuff and then after...once I revised it I took out a lot of the like things...in my first draft I had a lot of conversation dialogue and I took out a lot of it because I thought it wasn't necessary after what he said and I added more commentary than I did dialogue...It was a little challenging because I didn't really want to revise it but...

Even though he was reluctant, he took Dr. Jackson's advice, and made what he believed to be the proper revisions to his paper. Dr. Jackson's comments included giving Kevin the choice to make revisions, while at the same time, complimenting him on his draft. All of these comments reflected Dr. Jackson's giving Kevin legitimacy as a decision maker and a writer. (This legitimizing, in turn, may have led to Kevin's continual recognition of Dr. Jackson as the voice of authority.)

As seen earlier, the opening written comments on Essay #1 were positive. Note the words that I have put in italics: “You do a good job of narrating... plenty of *narrative and descriptive details... reflections* are appropriate.” The words Dr. Jackson used reflected the voice of the university and classroom instruction as he used these same phrases in the initial explanation of expectations for this essay when he discussed the need for “effective description... and an indication of significance.” The next comment meshed the university voice with that of the encouraging counselor as he wrote: “All this really needs is a *little more* editing and proofreading. *Let’s keep working* on verb tenses and word choice.” The use of “little” softened the suggestion for editing and the underlining for emphasis. The “let’s” maintained the idea of their being in this together and of Dr. Jackson’s role of counselor as he helped Kevin revise his paper. The “keep working” may have also been a reference to Kevin’s office visit prior to turning in this paper and the encouragement that “we will figure this out” -- note the plural pronoun, joining Kevin with the instructor -- with a little more work.

The comments on Essay #2 also appeared to reflect their on-going office visits and the relationship that was being built between them. Dr. Jackson’s final comments began with “Your *added* details are effective and add energy to your depiction.” The word “added” imply that Kevin had earlier taken his draft to Dr. Jackson, and now Dr. Jackson was continuing the conversation that took place in his office, complimenting the revisions Kevin made based on their conversation. The next comment took on the voice

of the university and complimented Kevin on his “*interesting and informative profile*,” writing that the “*organization is coherent and development effective*,” again echoing phrases from classroom instruction in reference to Essay #2 and its need for “a coherent organization plan.” Similar to his use of “a little more” in the first essay’s comments, here he says “all it needs is *a bit* more editing.” He gave some more specifics that needed to be fixed, “*a few* sentence grammar glitches,” and encouraged Kevin to “avoid the shifts in voice—they are *a little* distracting.” Even though Dr. Jackson gave more specific revision instructions while using the voice of the university than he did on Essay #1, they were minimized with the overlay of the counselor’s voice as “a bit,” “a few,” and “a little.” It seems that Kevin was very close to fulfilling Dr. Jackson’s expectations, and he recognized Kevin’s potential as a college writer with just a “bit” more work.

Essay #3’s comments, similar to the first two, started out positive and served to reinforce Kevin’s movement toward college writing. While there were more corrections made on this essay than on any of the others, Dr. Jackson continued to legitimize Kevin’s writing with positive encouragement. In the final comments, the voice of the university came through as he listed the types of errors Kevin was making related to vocabulary: exact word choice and wordiness, as well as grammar errors: agreement, pronoun reference, incomplete constructions. But the comments ended with the counselor voice, “let’s keep working.” Kevin’s participation in the key routine of office visits appeared to establish a working relationship with Dr. Jackson, and as Dr. Jackson recognized this he

continued to make his time and support a viable avenue of access for Kevin to this community.

Comments on Essay #4 recognized Kevin's writing ability as clearly meeting Dr. Jackson's expectations. All the written side comments were positive and there was only one suggestion about a better way to organize one section for coherence where Dr. Jackson bracketed one paragraph, drew an arrow to the bottom of the page, and wrote the suggestion of "better later (coh)." Grammar corrections were minimal on pages 1-3 and non-existent on pages 4-6. Dr. Jackson's final comments did not include any corrective advice, but instead, in the voice of the encouraging counselor, complimented Kevin, referring to his essay as "strong and unified," with examples that were "specific and supplemented," showing a "strong grasp of the reading." In the final comment, Dr. Jackson made reference to a "previous draft," which implied that Kevin had brought a draft to office hours prior to turning in his finished essay. This reference to a previous meeting acknowledged Kevin's participation in the expected routine of office visits, further legitimatizing Kevin's membership in the freshman writing community. The voice of the university, recognizing Kevin's competence in addressing this type of writing, was meshed with the "pat on the back" of the counselor as he summed up his written comments with "nice work."

Kevin's writing appears to reflect his participation in the classroom practices of Freshman Composition 1 as he continued to engage in the class, participate in the

routines, and recognize Dr. Jackson's authority. According to Dr. Jackson, as evidenced by the comments and grades on his essays, his writing improved throughout the quarter. The final grades on his essays were B, A-, B+ and A-.

Key Findings

According to the University's writing exam, Kevin was considered ready for college level writing. Based on this criterion, I suggest that Kevin's seemingly smooth entrance into this new community was related to three key findings.

- Kevin participated in the key practices and routines of Freshman Composition 1.
- Kevin was made aware of the expectations of college writing through Dr. Jackson's university voice, combined with an offering of specific ways of writing through Dr. Jackson's counselor voice, which served to foster his "legitimacy" as a member in the community.
- With each essay, Kevin's writing moved more and more into alignment with what looked like college level writing.

In March of the same academic year I conducted my research, I was able to speak with Kevin on the phone. He said his classes were going well, and he was being required to write in all of his classes. The focus of the writing was more analysis and interpretation

but he felt confident in his ability to produce what the instructors expected. He was “mildly upset” with his grade of a B+ in Freshman Composition 1 as he was only two points away from an A. His final comment was that he felt like he was improving as a writer and he was doing well.

Kevin had come to Freshmen Composition feeling somewhat confident that, in time, he would do well. He appeared to be one of the ones who “got it.” He appeared to not only recognize the avenues of access Dr. Jackson offered but also how to utilize what was offered to maximize his potential membership in this community. His participation in the expected routines in turn influenced his experience and he seemed to understand how to make the community and its expectations work for him. He understood the importance of granting legitimacy to the instructor, and also the need to act on that understanding by seeing the instructor as a resource to improve his writing. In turn, Dr. Jackson recognized Kevin’s potential as a college writer, offered guidance and support, and gave him key ways to access this level of writing. Kevin’s willingness to be an active member and Dr. Jackson’s indicators that Kevin was becoming one appeared to help construct a smooth entrance for Kevin into the college writing community.

Chapter 5

The Story of Becky

Becky came to class with multiple concerns, yet through participation in the routines and practices of the classroom was able to satisfy University requirements. She was given avenues of access to the college writing community through Dr. Jackson via his written comments on her papers and one-to-one meetings in his office as he began to recognize her as a potential member of the college writing community.

Entering a New Community

Becky appeared to adjust easily to the classroom routines of Freshman Composition 1. In the traditional manner of many of these freshmen students, she entered the classroom that first day, took a seat, and then occupied the same seat throughout the quarter. In contrast to the contemporary aspect of this classroom community, she did not bring a laptop to class and her phone stayed in her backpack. Yet in keeping with contemporary times, she wore a variety of skirts, t-shirts, jeans, and slip-on sandals to class. She was on time and present for every class. Throughout the quarter, she visited with the students next to her before Dr. Jackson arrived, but as soon as he did, turned to the front of the room and stopped talking. It appeared Becky knew how to act like a student and appeared willing to engage in the expected practices.

Background

Becky is Hispanic, born and raised in the same city as SW University. Her parents were both born in Mexico. She mentioned having a younger brother who was not interested in going to a university. “He doesn’t really try that much at school...he’d rather just go to a trade school or something like that because like after all, college is not for everybody.” She did not talk about her parents’ education level or languages spoken, although she did share that her parents expected a lot from her.

I had straight As this one year in high school so [*according to her parents*] now I should have straight As [*all the time*]. I don’t get pissed off but I get like upset because they don’t understand sometimes that it’s like challenging and stuff and it’s not all like easy like it was before.

She did say she tries her best to make her parents proud.

Becky also took AP English as a senior and, like Kevin, did not pass the AP exam. She appeared somewhat embarrassed, grinned slightly and shrugged her shoulders when she told me, although she did not expand on why she thought she had not passed. I asked what skills she felt she brought from high school to this new context:

B: Ummm...let’s see.... what I...what the genres and stuff, I guess...mmmm...like the persuasive essays when argumenting your point. That was kinda helpful and I learned to like...write or get a certain point across...in a certain way.

R: Did you get much feedback from your teacher?

B: I did. In the...like in the essays, when she graded them she would give us feedback and mostly like, my problems would be that maybe I was a little bit vague...maybe.

R: That's what she said?

B: I...I guess. I wouldn't go too much into detail. But then I thought I would but I guess I didn't.

Because she did not pass the University's entrance exam, she had to take the prerequisite English class over the summer and felt that it prepared her "a little bit" for Freshman Composition 1.

I actually feel a little bit more prepared cuz I've taken the summer course. I was able to know what the professors need or are expecting from the students...I'm able to write...write what they are expecting...I need some more preparation and stuff, but I feel a little more acquainted with the writing processes and stuff.

In spite of having taken the summer class, Becky's self evaluation as a writer entering the college writing community was still not very confident.

As a college writer...I do feel like I need a lot of improvement...in order to get an A on an essay cuz I'm not really satisfied with a C. I got a D this summer...I'm more like a math person...I don't really like writing because when I'm writing on something...like the thoughts that I want to say...I can't write them so fast down...it's irritating because when I'm writing the thought or something, then the other one that I was supposed to be writing like, gets away...but then when I do try to do like a...a outline before I start writing like...I can't really do the outline.

Becky entered this new community of writers with uncertainty. She brought some skills from high school, and knowledge of how to write persuasive essays -- which was

“kinda” helpful and showed her how to “get a certain point across.” She said the most frequent comment she received on her essays was about her “vagueness,” yet she didn’t appear to understand exactly what that meant. This misunderstanding sometimes happens when teachers write comments on student papers, sometimes creating difficulties for students as they attempt to meet teacher expectations (Sperling & Freedman, 1987).

While Becky was not overly confident in her ability to produce college level writing, the summer course served to make her aware of its expectations, and her belief that she was now more able to meet these expectations suggested that she recognized the legitimacy of the instruction and the importance of aligning her own writing with that of the university. This belief in the university and the instructor as authorities may have fostered her desire to fully participate in key routines (see Chapter 3) of Freshman Composition 1. Becky’s combination of participation and legitimacy granted to both the University and Dr. Jackson appeared to provide a pathway for her entry into this community.

Repertoires/Routines/Participation

The only information I had regarding Becky’s participation in the routines of the class came from her interviews and my observations as I sat in the back of the classroom. Unlike many of her classmates, and as indicated above, Becky did not use technology during class. More in keeping with a traditional sense of the classroom, she kept her book open and pencil poised over her notebook, and she appeared to write notes pertaining to the instructor’s lectures. She attended every class, was never late, and never left early. At

no time during the quarter did she raise her hand to ask a question; however, when the class responded chorally, she participated with them. During group activities, Becky moved her chair to better face her partner and appeared to engage with the text and the topic assigned as she took notes. When it came time for the group to share their findings, Becky was not the spokesperson, but did nod her head in agreement as her partner shared out loud, uttering an occasional “yeah” when her partner made an observation. As the quarter progressed she shared with me about her visits to Dr. Jackson’s office, a key participatory routine in this class, to review her essay drafts prior to writing a final draft. These visits are discussed in detail further in this chapter.

Expectations and Challenges

Becky’s expectations for this class were related to her experiences in her University summer English class. As mentioned previously, she felt more prepared for college writing since she had taken the summer class. She compared what she learned over the summer to some high school learning.

B: Back in high school we would write a certain...or we would think by like writing...like really complex sentences and wordy sentences to say a certain point it was good, but then, now in the university you have to use more structure throughout the sentences and your words are meant to say in the least amount sent...or words

R: Ok, so they’re asking you to write shorter sentences but more clear?

B: Yeah, like more concise.

R: So are the expectations of (*Dr. Jackson*) are pretty much in line with what you learned this summer?

B: Pretty much...pretty much.

This alignment of expectations between the two instructors may have furthered her recognition of the legitimacy of SW University's instruction. This instruction also provided an avenue of access for Becky as she came to Freshman Composition 1 already aware of some of the expectations for college writing.

In spite of the learning that had taken place in the summer class, she was still concerned about this class and her writing ability. When I asked about the challenges she was facing so far, they reflected her status as a second language learner:

Challenges...since my...my English is my second language so...it's kinda harder when you try...write something like my process, I have to think it first in Spanish and try to translate it in to English in my head and then like write it. And but then...umm...there's times when like if I write in Spanish like I will...the writing will just flow and I will be able to use certain vocabulary that is expected to be used in universities, but when I try to translate it to English...that vocabulary in Spanish like disappears in English so it kinda affects the way the writing is and stuff and it doesn't really have the same meaning.

Later on in the same interview, Becky talked about additional challenges:

...the other challenges I think like...I don't really like writing and I'm not so much comfortable with it and then third, like, I always have trouble, like,

organizing my thoughts and stuff so when it comes to writing, I just write and not really say the paragraphs are in correct order or if the writing flows and that...that's what it's supposed to do, use correct transitions... that's kinda hard though for me, to be able to make transition every single paragraph.

Becky was concerned about her ability to translate from Spanish to English in writing, and it was apparent as we talked that she had to stop and think about how to answer my questions in English. She often paused and repeated words and phrases. She said she had trouble organizing her thoughts and putting them on paper in a coherent way. It appeared that much of her concern stemmed from the D she received in the summer class that had been intended to prepare her for this class. It appeared, relative to her summer grade, that even though Becky had taken the class and said she had learned what the instructor wanted, according to the University, she was still falling short of becoming a college writer. This grade may have also added to her concerns and dislike of writing as she may have initially seen herself outside the writing community. Interesting to note, even though it appeared Becky did not satisfy the grade expectations for her summer class as a writer, it did not negate her experience or learning as she was able to produce satisfactory college level writing during the fall.

She continued to talk about how difficult writing was for her.

Ok...like see for math, like, you know, you can use...to solve this you can use this equation...like two equals and then three equals...but then in writing, you have to...it's a different style for everybody...and there's different...yeah there's rules and stuff to follow, but it's not as easy to follow as math equation or something.

For her, it appeared that while writing was bound by particular rules, everyone had a different style and so the rules were not clearly defined. She recognized the need for organization and transitions, but going from Spanish to English added another layer of complications. Unlike Kevin, for whom English was also his second language yet did not appear to struggle with translation, her need to translate was clearly a source of frustration for her. This frustration may have led to her participation in one-to-one office visits with Dr. Jackson, gaining his support through his university and counselor voices, as she, like Kevin, recognized and utilized Dr. Jackson as a resource for writing.

We moved on to talk about how she was going to overcome her challenges. When I referred back to her comment about how as a college writer she needed “a little bit more preparation,” I asked her how she was planning on “preparing herself more.” When she hesitated, I mentioned the essay she was currently working on.

R: Think about the paper you’re writing right now. What are you doing?
What’s going through your head as you are getting ready to write a draft?

B: Yeah. Ummm...well...like I’m thinking about what I want to write in...in the essay...what ...what I want to do and then when something comes up I just kinda write it...my thoughts down. That way when I’m writing it, I really know what I want to write about.

R: Ok.

B: And ummm...and write...oh so the readings that we're doing from the textbook?

R: [uh huh]

B: They have been really helpful cuz there's a...like there's a section where like it tells you, oh...ummm...ummm...where you can break it down the things you can write about like the climax the...or first... the exposition and rising action and then so...ummm...before I can write the essay, I'm trying to go and study and write that...like the main points I want to do for those things. And then like, asking questions ummm...like ummm...going to my professor's office hours...and asking him how my essay is developing, if I am on the right track? And stuff...or also for like the... the...tutoring?

R: Uh huh.

B: Get some extra help there.

R: You know they have a writing center here?

B: Ummm...yeah. They have a writing center.

R: So are you talking about tutoring from him or tutoring from the writing center?

B: From the writing center

While Becky was not overly comfortable with her writing skills, she was able to recognize her struggles and knew where to go to get help. She made three key points about how she was going to meet these challenges: by using the textbook for a mentor text, going to Dr. Jackson's office hours, and seeking out the writing center for tutoring. The places she was seeking help suggest her granting legitimacy to the University and the avenues offered to freshmen for help with writing. Her use of these available resources offered by both the University and Dr. Jackson was also an indication of her willingness to participate in the expectations of this community.

In relation to her comments about her struggles to become a competent writer, I asked her what she believed a successful writer should be able to do and she had difficulty articulating what she meant.

To be successful, like, to be able to write...and have some...of if somebody else is going to read it to be...well, to have the reader like really...ummm...not interact, but like what's a word...ummm...to really like get it or like what you're writing.

When we talked further about this topic, she rephrased it as "...to really make a difference in someone's point of view or life style through your writing. I would consider that successful." These expectations may have been in response to a classroom discussion held the day of and prior to our interview. When talking about writing a narrative, Dr. Jackson asked students to think about the reader:

Who's going to be reading about your experience? How do you want to come across to them? Remember, they're making judgments about you...and you need to be aware of that. How do you want them to feel? What do you want them to think?

This emphasis on the reader appeared to influence Becky's response to me of what writing should be. Similar to Kevin's response to Dr. Jackson, her response suggested that she valued Dr. Jackson's opinion, further legitimizing his role as the instructor, as well as suggesting Becky's full participation as a student in class as she was listening and folded Dr. Jackson's expectations of good writing into her own definition.

Our second interview was very short and informal. We had scheduled time for a formal one, but she had forgotten to come – she said she was in the middle of finishing a math midterm exam. The second time we scheduled to meet prior to class, she forgot as well, so rather than meet in my “office,” she agreed to talk with me as she had a few minutes before her next class. We talked on the way to my car. I asked her about the challenges we had discussed in our first interview and if any of these had been overcome or if there were any new ones? She felt the challenges of translation, organization and flow were still there, but she was gaining a new level of confidence as the last two grades on her essays were Bs. She said she was beginning to realize that she can “make writing say whatever she wants,” and was hoping for an A on her next essay. With this comment, Becky demonstrated her emerging identity with the college writing community. By this time, the seventh week in the ten week quarter, she had moved from a student who “didn't really like writing” to one who was able to recognize her own ability to construct

writing to communicate whatever she wanted. This recognition of her control over language further indicated her meeting Dr. Jackson's explicitly stated expectation during class that students "need to be in control of language," (see Chapter 3).

In our final interview at the end of the quarter, Becky appeared pleased with her progress. She had received As on the last two papers. She was feeling better about writing essays and "how you're supposed to go off and organize them." She said that she felt she had improved as a writer and even her speaking was more fluid, as seen by the transcript of her comment.

Yeah, like, I feel like I have improved somewhat but still think that there's way more improvement I need to get better in my essays and in my writing. Definitely I've improved my organization. Like before I would just write stuff all over the place without organizing my thoughts and stuff. I would just write as I wrote I was thinking or was writing things. In transitioning from one paragraph to another, I always used to have trouble with that? And now I kind of have the flow a little bit more and stuff...yeah.

Becky summed up her self-evaluation as a writer at the end of our third conversation with, "I was surprised I wasn't that bad."

Becky had started out the quarter with multiple concerns about her writing, even after having taken the summer class. However, by the end of the quarter, her level of confidence had changed dramatically as she had figured out a way to successfully meet the challenges and had taken advantage of the roads of access offered to her through the University's textbook, classroom participation, and Dr. Jackson's role as counselor and instructional guide.

Becky's writing

Becky shared the final graded copy of Essay #1, Essay #2 (except for the last page), Essay #3 and a draft of Essay #4. Her essays are shown below. When I asked for the final page of Essay #2 and the graded copy of Essay #4, she said the essay was “in my dorm,” or “I’ll bring it next time,” or “I forgot.” After asking twice and sensing her reticence to share, I did not ask again. The prompts for these essays are included in Appendix A.

Essay #1

07 October 2011

Confronting Change

Summer. Bright and sunny. That's how the past days had been and I was sure that that Monday would not be the exception. However, ^{these days} ~~my~~ thoughts were interrupted by my father's news.

It had been two weeks, two weeks into the school year. My father had been trying to register me for school, but the local elementary schools were full. My dad had to register me at ~~the~~ Elementary instead, which was 45 minutes away. ^{finally (how)}

^{After that.} The news completely ruined my day. "Put on your backpack you are finally going to school." ✓

My heartbeat stopped. The day was no longer enjoyable; not even the brightest sun would make me feel better. It was 6:30am, when my father started driving to ~~the~~. At the first stop sign we turned right, another right at the stop light, and in less than half a mile we were on the 605 freeway. ✓
Nice details.

If it had been another time, I would have been admiring the scenery, the buildings, the trees, and even the cars, but for now I detested everything. I hated the sight of everything.

literally wanted to be eaten by the ground and disappear. These 45 minutes were eternally long and anxious.

I did not want to go to class. I extremely detested sitting on a desk for hours, listening to the teacher, and being told what to do. Besides, I had only been in the United States for five months, so I didn't trust anybody but my dad. To make matters worse, English was not yet in my vocabulary.

Helpful explanation.

My dad parked in front of the school. As we walked towards the entrance, I dreaded the sight of the big building and the intimidating gray fencing around it. Unlike my kinder garden school in Mexico, ^{which was just? (dad)} ~~Elementary~~ Elementary was all gathered into one building of three floors.

Once we passed through the gate, I immediately felt like an unfortunate captive with no guarantee of surviving. Once in the building, we turned to the right towards the office. There was an old lady with gray hair and a bright smile sitting in the front desk. Her smile did not make me feel welcomed at all. I felt an urge to run and escape out of their reach. Once my father knew I was in good hands, he gave me a "see you later" hug and left.

"No! I am lonely. Who will protect me?" ^{I shook inwardly (travis)} My mind was in complete turmoil. I immediately began preparing my escape.

"Can I use the restroom?" I asked. My plan was to go and then never return, but a lady with brown hair, big red glasses, and red lipstick escorted me to the restroom. While in the beige restroom stalls, I waited to hear her departure, but she remained. She took hold of my hand on our way back to the office. I immediately became anxious. My plan had failed. I did not know what to do next, I only wanted to go home, and remain home. I could not tolerate a complete stranger, with big red glasses, holding my hand.

Exhausted.
"Let me go! Let me go! I hate you!" I desperately tried to free myself, but I couldn't. The more I screamed, the harder her grasp was. However, I managed to release myself. When I did, she bent down to control me, but instead I knocked-off her big red glasses.

*Wid
scene*
Her cheeks suddenly turned red as a tomato and I thought she would scream. Instead, her reaction was to stand upright and while she took a deep breath, she *bent down and (did)* picked up her glasses. When she did this, I immediately realized that I had lost the battle. She walked me back to the office. She recounted the happenings to the gray haired lady. I thought I was going to get punished, but instead she gave me that big bright smile once again. She made a call and soon a student walked into the office.

and (cc)
"this is [redacted] and he will walk you to class." At this point I was sure that I had no way out. [redacted] walked me downstairs and to the left. We walked into the first class to the left. [redacted] tall, light skinned, with pink cheeks, was very welcoming and even introduced me to the class. I was afraid to utter a word because I did not know any English. To my luck I was sat next to a girl who spoke Spanish, *and (cc)* we actually became good friends. Later on [redacted] informed me that the lady I had knocked the glasses off would start teaching me English; therefore I had to arrive an hour earlier the next day. Tuesday came and there I was an hour earlier waiting for [redacted] the lady *wrote glasses I (missed)* smacked the glasses off, to walk into the classroom. When she came in, the first thing she did was look at me as if searching for my soul. In seconds, she relaxed and gave me a big bright smile. I realized I had acted badly. When she gave me that smile, it meant everything for me. It meant that she had forgiven me and that we could leave the event behind.

✓ "Good Morning [redacted] how is it going?" This question proved even more the sole interest of Mrs. [redacted] to make me a better person. As the day progressed, I realized what a great person she was. I felt close to her because she had seen the rebellious me and even understood the reason for my initial behavior. Because of this, I shared my thoughts and experiences with her with less embarrassment and more sincerity. Our communication became really efficient, enough that I was speaking, reading, and writing basic English in the first month. She would even tell other teachers about my improvements, while walking down the hallway.

Nice
Revision

At the age of six, I was afraid of not only being outside my comfort zone, but also being introduced to new ^{things (w)} stuff. I have learned to welcome this new stuff, since that is the only way we can grow as individuals. ~~If it would not have been because I was~~ ^{to I had} introduced to a new language in elementary, then I wouldn't be bilingual today. Also, I realized school was fun in that I could socialize with people my age, while learning skills and teachings for life.

appropriate
conclusion

in-kind

When we see change coming towards us, we run. Instead, we have to embrace it and accept the challenges because it is through the challenges that we become better individuals.

[redacted]

This is a well chosen incident that makes a valuable point. You do a good job of bringing the point out explicitly and you illustrate it with citing specific narrative details. It's a solid first essay. ^{keep} ^{working} ^{on} this quarter on sentence grammar. Drop by with a draft of Essay Two next week and we can see how you are doing.

B

Essay #2

24 October 2011

Smoke it Out

Distraction. Relaxation. Being outside the box. That is what a college student looks for after a hectic week. [redacted] Hookah Lounge located 15 minutes south of [redacted] east of [redacted] is a perfect place to settle down and enjoy Hookahs. Hookah or Shisha is used to smoke flavored tobacco.

Good.
But
the
down
a bit
here
the
hookahs
are
good?
Coke

Good

"May I buy two Hookahs?" [redacted] asked.

"What flavors?" the brown skinned Arabic cashier man asked.

My friends [redacted] and I looked at the different flavors. Raspberry, White Peach, Lemon Mint, Watermelon, Tropical Mango, Island Papaya, Blue-Melon, Strawberry, and Grapefruit to only name a few of the 78 different flavors. It was hard to choose just two.

Good

the
hookahs

"Give us Raspberry and Blue-Melon, please." [redacted] finally responded after we all had come to a decision. As we were paying I noticed the tall slim Hookahs behind the counter sitting one next to the other. Also, a big long tapestry with tan diamonds embedded in it. After we paid we were ready to find a comfortable area to sit.

Good.
But
downside
hookahs
a bit
more
Coke

The Hookah Lounge was broken down into three areas: the entrance room, where we found the cashier, the patio area, and a "dark" room, located next to it. While the patio area played Arab music, the "dark" room was playing American music.

Are they actually called "dark" rooms? why?

We walked into the patio area towards the back, where we found a round glass table. Here we took ^{seats} in black cushioned metal chairs. Even though the chairs were metal, they were still comfortable.

The first room, where we found the cashier, looked more like a business than a Hookah Lounge. As we walked past the first room and into the patio outside, we noticed the difference. The outside no longer looked like a business, but a Hookah Lounge. The place was very Middle Eastern ^{culture} influenced. Hookah Cafés are mostly operated by Arabic individuals. Indeed, the business was ran by an Arab family. Their heritage could be seen in every inch of the Lounge.

culture

While I was getting comfortable in the metal chairs, I observed the wall right in front of me, the southwest wall. It had a painting that depicted a desert with a cave. In this cave, three man dressed in black and tan Kurtas and check pattern Keffiyehs on their head, were observing a belly dancer who was in the middle of the cave. The woman was wearing a bodieh. This bodieh outfit consist of a purple bra decorated with silver rhinestones and a long matching purple skirt. Unlike the other bellydancers, she was not wearing a headdress, allowing her beautiful black long hair to be displayed.

(good)

OK

While we were sitting down, a tall bearded good looking guy, [redacted] approached our table with the Hookahs. "How do you use them?" I wondered. I had never smoked in my life; one because I did not see the point and two because it was against my family morals. The tall guy put each Hookah at opposite sides of the table. The moment had come, I was expected to

What is possibly intended about it? (why)

smoke, but at the same time I was expected to ^{stick to moral code (exact)?} keep my morals. "Why am I about to do this? What is the point in doing it?" My mind was in confusion. However, I did know that I wanted to discover a mystery that was eating up inside at me. That was, "Why do people drink and smoke?"

Education
conflict.

When I looked and observed the Hookah smokers, the answer to my question was given through their eyes and actions. I realized that they were all living in the moment and not worrying about the tomorrow or the yesterday. Instead they were focused on that precise moment in time.

A large group of people sitting in a large table to the left of us were really enjoying themselves. A chubby woman with curly hair was inhaling Hookah. Her deep ^{expression (look)} look showed how careless she was about the world. She was so careless that she ^{she} choked on the smoke. ^{choked} Immediately her companions began to laugh, not at her so much, but they used her incident as a reason to laugh and enjoy themselves.

As I looked around I saw a group of ^{each} three men with long hair tied into a ponytail, playing cards. These men were also enjoying themselves at the moment. One of them inhaled Hookah and again I was able to see that deep look that showed satisfaction and relaxation.

Good. But
can you
describe the
look
more?

However, Hookah Lounges are not only used relax with others, but to also be by yourself. A college student, was by himself in the table in front of us. He was tall, slim with black undulated hair. While the Hookah mouthpiece was in his mouth, he wore that concentrated expression, which allowed him to finish his work on his laptop. He currently attends while majoring in Biology and he is 25 years old. He started to attend six years ago.

X

Good!

"Why do you prefer coming to [redacted], instead of the campus library?" I asked.

[redacted] is opened to two in morning and Hookah keeps me concentrated in that it helps to control my fidgeting," he responded. Almost daily, [redacted] spends four to five hours at [redacted] while smoking four Hookahs. While we were conversing, he ordered his third one, apple flavored, which is his favorite one.

*Also
1st
interview*

"What do you like about this Hookah Lounge?" I asked.

"I like how it is quieter than other lounges, that it is close to home, and it is less expensive," [redacted] responded. "If you come by yourself, you can really get some work done," he added.

*Interesting.
Does this
look like a
common
approach?*

*Why the different
terms?
(do)*

Now it was my turn to feel the effects of Hookah or Shisha. My three friends had already tried it. As I was getting ready to do something for the first time, I took a closer look at the Hookah. The blue and white ceramic base decorated with white flowers, was holding the water.

*Helpful
image.*



<http://maharajahhookah.com>

The smoke passes through this bowl in order to be cooled down. On top of the base was the pipe, which is the body of the Hookah. The body is usually made out of brass, tin, or stainless steel. Attached to the pipe was the hose, which was green and tan colored. At the end of the hose, the metal mouthpiece was located. "Hookah condoms" are used to allow for a sanitary smoking, since everybody uses these metal mouthpieces. The very top consist of a small silver bowl, which holds the flavored tobacco. The bowl is covered by aluminum, which holds the coals. These coals are the ones that heat up the tobacco, in order for it to be inhaled. Below the bowl, a round silver coal tray can be found, which catches the ashes from the coals.

*Nice
description*

*Helpful
info*

Now I was ready to inhale. [redacted] handed me the Raspberry flavored Hookah. I was starting to think about it twice, when I impulsively inhaled. Just like in movies, I was expecting to choke on the smoke, but I did not. Once I inhaled, I slowly exhaled a great amount of smoke. The taste of Raspberry was not very heavy, but the smoke did burn my throat.

[redacted] came to change the coals. The tobacco usually last from one and a half to two hours, depending on the coals. If the coals were to be placed in the middle of the aluminum, then the tobacco would burn up faster. On the other hand, if they are placed in the edges, then it lasts longer.

the explanation.

"Do you smoke Hookah?" I asked [redacted].

"Yes, I like the way I feel relaxed," [redacted] responded. [redacted] started to smoke when he was ten years old and now smokes three to four Hookahs daily; his favorite flavor is apple.

"Does the tobacco contain nicotine?" I asked.

"Our tobacco only contains the flavor and honey," [redacted] responded. He explained how the Nakla tobacco used for Hookah's is unwashed, therefore; it contains more nicotine. Yet they use the Egyptian and Sirian tobacco, which are the best ones and do not have nicotine.

Industry

"How long has [redacted] been in business?" I inquired.

"It has been opened since 2000," he responded. The Hookah Lounges originated in India. They soon spread to Iran, Turkey, and Egypt. It was in Egypt that it gained more popularity. In the United States, they were introduced decades ago, in immigrant cities like New York and Los Angeles.

In front behind

Essay #3

7 November 2011

A Mental Disorder

"Hello! Is there anybody in there?" is part of the lyrics to *The Wall* by Pink Floyd. This is a song Sean, a male in his mid-twenties, suffering from Schizophrenia, listens to everyday. Every day he is in his room sitting on his couch, swaying back and forth, ^{oblivious to (w)} ~~with an ignorant regard~~ ~~toward~~ the surroundings.

Nice short

^{it} What is ^{it} Schizophrenia? It is a mental disorder that affects 7.2 out of 100 individuals, 51 million in the whole world (Colburn). This mental disease affects an individual's identity, ^{such} that their way of thinking, their ability to express their emotions, and social relationships are affected for the worse (Andreasen 3). ^{seriously disrupted?}

Help!

Help! parts.

Even though the word "Schizophrenia" has recently been introduced to the medical field, the disease can be first traced in the Bible. In the book of Samuel in the Old Testament, King Saul becomes very paranoid at David's success at defeating Goliath in order to defend the Israelites. David wins other battles afterwards, which leads King Saul to become paranoid. His paranoia leads him to plan for David's death and even ^{to try to} ~~off~~ carrying it out himself (Andreasen 3). King Saul could not tolerate anybody ^{being worse} ~~to be~~ better than him. His paranoia would not allow him to sleep, which caused him to be in more fury as the days progressed.

Interests great enough

There are different types of Schizophrenia, which vary in severity. These are the paranoid, disorganized, catatonic, undifferentiated, and residual types (Colburn). The paranoid

Useful classification

type, the most common, experience delusion and hallucinations. In delusions, the individual holds on to false belief even though there is evidence to prove him wrong. While experiencing hallucinations the individual hears and sees things that are not there. The disorganized type is one in which the individual suffers from thought disorder and from flat affect. In flat affect the (emotional responsiveness is greatly reduced. The patient is challenged to even show joy at any given moment. The catatonic individual is immobile and has "waxy flexibility." This means that (the individual will not move for long periods of time and if his hand were to be moved, he would not move it until it was moved again. The undifferentiated type is one in which psychotic symptoms are present, this is more severe. Lastly, the residual type has a low activity of positive symptoms.)

Clear
classification

Needs a little more explanation. (Shw)

The symptoms of Schizophrenia are divided into two classifications, the positive and the negative. According to Colburn the positive symptoms include hallucinations, incoherent speech, inappropriate laughter, repetitious language, tears, or rage, while the negative symptoms include toneless voices, expressionless faces or mute and rigid bodies. It is important to note that not all the symptoms will be found in one individual.

Good

Schizophrenia is not brought upon an individual by one exact factor, instead by a combination of various elements. Genetics is one factor. Scientists have not yet found a specific gene that causes this mental disorder; however, it has been proven that if at least one parent has schizophrenia, the child has a 10% higher probability of getting it (Weiler). Other causes are the loss of a close friend or family member, extreme stress, or drug abuse. Also, this mental disorder can be caused by mutations in the DNA sequence and prenatal exposure to infections. However, the exposure to infections is not yet proven to lead to Schizophrenia later in life. Other elements

Important
statements

the company because he was the youngest one and with a degree. This individual had symptoms of paranoia, which showed signals of Schizophrenia. When he commented to her ^{his} sister ^(was) of what he believed, she just suggested searching for another job, not realizing the severity of the situation. Months later he visited a psychiatrist, but discouraged at the outcome and results, he committed suicide. How can a family and a community ensure that a proper treatment is received? ^{for someone like this (trans)}

^{trans} Even though medical professionals might be knowledgeable of the symptoms and be backed by medicine and technology to help treat these diseases, they sometimes do not make adequate diagnosis and this sometimes might lead to a patient's suicide. ^{to what extent (exact)} To what point can a human depend on technology and medicine in order to keep a loved one alive and healthy?

An individual suffering from Schizophrenia can find treatment through medications or ^{therapy (we)} through psychologist sessions. The medicine prescribed ^{includes} is anti-psychotic, such as chlorpromazine. This medicine reduces an individual's reactions to "irrelevant stimuli" (Cölburn). A medication designed mostly to treat negative symptoms is Etozapine, which blocks dopamine receptors and serotonin activity. However, the downfall of taking this medication is that the toxicity negatively affects the white blood cells. ^{liability (we)} The third treatment is the psychologist ^{pushed by (line)} who observes the patients behavior, then ^(with) they decide if this behavior is acceptable or not. After this the psychologist teaches the patient new skills to live a better life. This surely does not have any side effects, but it might be harder for the patient to endure.

Good, specific information.

Is this effective?

Schizophrenia serves to show how powerful our brain is and how it can play tricks on us, if we allow her. In minutes this disorder can make us believe that we are being persecuted, that the trees are monsters about to kill us, or even that the sky is full of spiders that will eat us;

Visual delus!

however, the reality is different and it is what we make of it, not what we allow our brain to
make of it.

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(good)

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Strong unity & development here. This is full of useful information and helpful exemplification. There are still a couple of places where coherence could be tightened up a bit more. And room for a bit more clarity. But your development is strong.

A-

Essay #4

21 November 2011

While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till it be digested, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it.

Samuel Johnson

“Last Sunday, a young hiker, stranded by an injury, was found dead in a remote camp in the Alaskan interior (Krakauer 98).” ^{For his} Death. Death is the only guaranteed event of our lives. When a loved one is lost we may face many challenges in coping with the lost. How should we cope with this and which ways are more effective? In the novel, *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer, Christopher McCandless's family is forced to face his unexpected death. In order to cope with their sentiment of grief and bereavement, the family went through different stages.

What could have been the possible stages the family experienced? The possible five stages of grief towards Chris's death are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Smith, and Segal). While in the stage of denial, an individual rejects to believe what is happening. In anger, an individual is not only mad at the situation, but is also searching for somebody to blame. In bargaining, an individual wants to believe that if they do something then the situation will change. In the stage of depression, the individual's state of mind does not allow them to do their daily routines. Finally in the stage of acceptance, the individual feels at peace in the situation. Even though not everybody goes through these stages, the McCandless family did

go through a few of them. Carine McCandless, Chris's younger sister, went through the phase of denial. After Chris Fish informs Carine of Chris McCandless's death, Carine involuntarily starts denying the loss physically and verbally. While shaking her head back and forth she screamed, "No! Chris isn't dead. (Krakauer 130)"³ Carine remained hysterical and out of her mind for five hours, she was in the couch fixed into a fetal position, screaming her lungs out. When her husband tried to comfort her, she only screamed at him to leave her alone. Carine had only begun to cope with her beloved brother's loss, the brother to whom she was most attached to. The McCandless family does face another of the stages, depression. The depression affects both Carine and Billie's daily routines. Their appetite is altered to the point where they both lose weight (Krakauer 131). Carine lost ten pounds, while Billie lost eight pounds. On the other hand, Chris's father, Walt, did not lose weight, rather he began eating more causing him to gain eight pounds. It was not easy for the McCandless family to know that Chris was forever gone. After all, it is different to not know anything of Chris's whereabouts, than to all of a sudden know that he is no longer living.

The stages of grief and loss as well the symptoms depend on each person. These symptoms can be identified as: shock and disbelief, sadness, guilt, anger, fear, and physical symptoms (Smith, and Segal). Walt McCandless shows one of the symptoms⁴ disbelieving the fact that Chris is permanently gone. After sharing the events to Krakauer about the three-day hike to Shenandoah to climb Old Rag, Walt pauses and becomes quiet looking into the distance in disbelief (Krakauer 109). During this trip, Walt, Chris, and Walt's youngest son from his first marriage, had reached the 13,000-foot elevation at Keyhole, Walt was ready to go down again, while Chris wanted to go on despite the obvious danger. Walt just could not believe that that kid who was fearless and ready to take any challenges was now gone at such a young age and with

more than a bright future in front of him, promising him everything he desired. Carine presents the symptom of grief through sadness. Ten months after Chris's death Carine still grieved deeply. Carine says that she "can't seem to get through a day without crying" (Krause 129).⁷ Since she has known of her brother's death, she has not been able to complete the twenty-minute drive from her house to the shop without crying after she thinks of her beloved brother. She explains how she can get over it, but that these happenings are hard for her to deal with on a daily basis. Carine also recounts her parents' feeling of guilt from not allowing Chris to take Buck, the dog, along with him (Krause 128). The summer after Chris had graduated from Emory University he asked to take Buck with him; however, the dog was still recovering from the time he got hit by a car, leading his parents to not consent to his request. The family can't stop wondering if the events would have turned differently if Buck went with Chris, after all "there's no way he would have taken the same kind of chances if Buck had been with him" (Krause 128).⁷

How should a family with these symptoms overcome the situation? The number one tip to overcome grief and bereavement is getting support. To get support an individual can turn to friends and family members, draw comfort from faith, join a support group, or talk to a therapist or grief counselor (Smith and Segal). Even though one might feel strong, it is still good to search for the help of those who love us, since they are there in order to help us; we just need to let them know how we can be helped, either by offering us their shoulder for us to cry on or helping with funeral arrangements. Getting closer to our faith can also help overcome this grief by praying, going to church, and even meditating. Even when we have loved ones surrounding us, a support group would not be a bad idea to join, since sharing our grief with others with similar experiences helps. When the sentiment is too big for us to overcome, we should talk with a

therapist in order to make it easier to bear. Even before Carine knows of her brother's death, in her grief of uncertainty, she "made peace with her parents (Krakauer 129)." Now she calls their relationship "extremely good." In her attempts to overcome the situation, Carine visits a church. While on their way to Virginia Beach, Carine asked Chris Fish to stop at their church, "I went in and sat at the altar for an hour or so (Krakauer 130)." Carine was able to find comfort in her faith, even though she was questioning God for Chris's departure from this world. ?

A family cannot only find support in order to overcome grief, but they can also take care of themselves as the second tip (Smith, and Segal). In order to take care of ourselves we can face our feelings, express feelings in a productive way, and look after our physical health. Acknowledging the pain instead of preventing it helps to overcome it, otherwise an individual can become depressed, anxious, or addicted to drugs. An effective way of expressing our feelings we can write down what we have not had the opportunity to say. Also, we can get involved in organizations that were important to the deceased. In order to take care of our physical health we need to get enough sleep, have balanced meals, and exercise. These activities will help us be in a good mental health, which helps to deal with grief. Chris's parents are ready to face their feelings by visiting the site where their son's life expires. They were unable to travel there by feet, since the Teklanika River was running high, so they had to take the helicopter. In fifteen minutes they traveled what took Chris four days to walk (Krakauer 201). Once there "Walt and Billie walk quietly around the decrepit vehicle," observing the last home of Chris (Krakauer 202). Billie does not only walk around the site, but also goes into the bus and sits on the mattress where her son breathed his last breaths. In honor of Chris, "Walt installs a memorial just inside the door (Krakauer 202)." This is a good sign of both the parents starting to accept the reality, Chris's absence not of two years, but of a whole life-time. While Jon Krakauer was

Interviewing the McCandless family they did not hide any information from him nor "[attempted] to exert control over the book's content or direction, despite knowing that some material would be extremely painful to see in print (Krakauer 205)". This showed the family's acceptance and resignation to the present and their future lives without Chris McCandless and that they were trying their best to move on with their own lives. ^{new paragraph!} The McCandless family became involved in causes that Chris supported. Twenty percent of the royalties sold by the novel would be directed to Chris McCandless Scholarship Foundation (Krakauer 205).

For the most part the McCandless family was doing fairly well in coping with their grief, however, that is not the case for the following individual. This man's family was burnt to death after being hit by a gasoline tanker. When the man was informed of the news he entered a state of shock and disbelief, in which he remained for a week. In an attempt to forget and deny the present situation, he started drinking up to a half a gallon of whisky daily. He also became addicted to drugs, due to this he was not able to keep a job, causing him to become a beggar.

The modes for coping with death and bereavement between these two instances were different and affected the success of overcoming grief. Definitely, accepting the circumstances and the feeling, turning to family members, getting closer to our faith, keeping good guard of our physic and joining a support group makes a difference when overcoming a loved one's death. Doing these things allows an individual to be in the correct state of mind to survive without that special someone.

When faced with someone's death, a family is challenged to cope with the grief, either in a positive or negative way. The McCandless family does a good job in coping with their loss.

They were able to play with their feelings in order to turn them from a negative to positive ones, in which they can understand that life in this world continues without even death stopping it.

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Perspective #1 – The University’s Rubric

Table 6

Becky’s Essay Scores by Four Readers

University Entrance Exam	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3	Essay #4
5	1 st Rdr - 4	1 st Rdr - 4	1 st Rdr - 5	1 st Rdr - 4
	2 nd Rdr - 3	2 nd Rdr - 4	2 nd Rdr - 5	2 nd Rdr - 5
	3 rd Rdr - 4	3 rd Rdr - 4	3 rd Rdr - 5	3 rd Rdr - 4
	Avg – 3.6	Avg – 4.0	Avg – 5.0	Avg - 4.3

Note: Scoring based on a 6-point scale and scores in bold are the averaged scores of all three readers; “Rdr” stands for Reader; “Avg” stands for Average

Table 6 shows Becky’s scores as reflected on the University rubric. Similar to Kevin’s entrance exam essay, I had no input about her entrance exam other than the score. Becky received a 5 on her entrance exam and had to take the required summer course before she could enroll in Freshman Composition 1. Her entrance exam essay marginally answered the prompt, was not clearly organized, was repetitive, and included

several grammatical errors. She struggled with syntax and her word choice was simple. She was required to take the summer class, which appeared to be beneficial for her progress toward becoming a college writer as evidenced by her essay scores in the fall.

On Essay #1, the narrative, Becky described her first day of kindergarten as a native Spanish speaker. She used relevant details to describe her experience, yet did not go into depth on the significance of the event. Her response was satisfactory, but did contain some grammar errors. I and the third reader gave it a score of 4, the second reader gave it a 3 and commented: “simplistic; missed some of the assignment; errors.”

Essay #2 received a score of 4 from all three readers. This essay profiled a Hookah bar and included details and dialogue that supported the text, had “sufficient examples” and a clear explanation of the bar and activities therein. There were a variety of sentence types and fewer syntax and grammar errors than Essay #1. When she shared this essay with me, she neglected to include the final page, including the grade and Dr. Jackson’s final comments. When I asked about it, she told me it must have come off in her backpack or dorm room and that she would look for it. She either did not find it or decided not to share it with me before the quarter was over.

Essay #3, the exploration and definition of Schizophrenia, received a 5 from all three readers. Her explanation of the concept was clear and included definitions as well as citations from four different sources. While there were more errors in this essay than the other three, I suggest that similar to Kevin on his Essay #3, this was due in part to the

complexity of the genre, which may have been unfamiliar to Becky. She had mentioned previously that she struggled with translating from Spanish to English and as this genre required more academic-type discourse and vocabulary than a narrative, this may have added to her difficulties in word choice and usage. However, her coverage of the topic was “clearly competent” enough to forgive the grammar mistakes.

Essay #4, an explanation of a theme from the novel, explored the concept of the stages of grief associated with the death of a loved one. I gave it a score of a 4 as it “elaborated with sufficient examples” and connected back to the original text of the novel, *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer as well as demonstrated Becky’s ability to “sufficiently” control grammar usage and sentence variety. The second reader gave it a 5 and wrote, “Interesting reading.” The third reader gave it a 4.

According to the University rubric applied by the readers, Becky showed marked improvement in her essay writing. Between the summer session and the end of the fall session, Becky appeared to be emerging as a college writer.

Perspective #2– The Instructor’s

Table 7

Dr. Jackson’s proofreading marks on Becky’s Essays

Proof reading mark/symbol	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3
✓	12	0	0
☆	5	3	0
_____	15	15	36
=====	0	7	5
□	1	6	11
~~~~~ (squiggly line under word(s))	0	3	4
Agr	1	0	0
Coh	0	0	0
Comp	0	0	0
CS	1	0	0
Dev	2	4	1
Dig	0	0	0
Exact	0	1	0
Frag	0	0	0

Lc	0	0	1
Logic	0	0	0
Mixed	2	0	0
Num	0	0	0
Ref	0	0	0
Shift	0	0	1
T	0	0	0
Trans	2	0	1
Usage	0	0	3
Voice	0	0	0
W	0	0	2
Wc	1	1	2
Ww	0	1	0

---

Becky's Essay #1 was a narrative about her first experience in kindergarten. Similar to the side comments on Kevin's Essay #1, all of Dr. Jackson's side comments were positive: "nice details," "helpful explanation," "vivid scene," "nice resolution," and "appropriate conclusion." As shown in Table 7, in addition to these, Dr. Jackson checked 12 good narrative details, starred 5 good descriptive details, and underlined 15 phrases or sentences that indicated significance/reflections. Becky's narrative writing appeared to follow Dr. Jackson's expectations for Essay #1 that he had discussed in class: "well told

story, effective description, and indication of significance” (see Chapter 3). She had few errors in this paper and when Dr. Jackson wrote a proofreading mark, he rewrote the corrections above the words.

Summer. Bright and sunny. That's how the past days had been and I was sure that that Monday would not be the exception. However, ^{that (cs)} ~~this~~ thoughts were interrupted by my father's news.

It had been two weeks, two weeks into the school year. My father had been trying to register me for school, but the local elementary schools were full. My dad had to register me at ^{finally (trns)} ~~some~~ Elementary instead, which was 45 minutes away.

Aside from the two errors shown, she had one comma splice (cs), one other transition error (tran), two places where he asked for more development (dev), two places where she had mixed construction (mixed) and one word choice (wc) correction. In each case, he wrote the correction above her words. In another sentence, he simply added a suggestion, although Becky had not made a mistake.

^{I shouted.}  
"Let me go! Let me go! I hate you!" [^] I desperately tried to free myself, but I couldn't.

Dr. Jackson's final comments recognized Becky as a potential college writer: "well chosen incident," "valuable point," "effective specific narrative details." He ended with: "It's a solid first essay," followed by an invitation for her to "drop by with a draft of Essay #2 next week." Interesting to note, in his invitation, it appeared that originally he

wrote “*Let’s work* this quarter on sentence grammar,” but then inserted a “keep” and

changed “work” to “working.” *Let's keep working this*

This “correction” to his original comment suggested that he recognized her participation in collaboration between them as they worked together to correct her grammar, increasing the likelihood of her potential membership as a college writer. She received a B on this paper, an indication that she was moving closer to meeting his expectations.

Essay #2 was to be a profile of a person, place, or event and Becky wrote about her first experience in a Hookah Bar. This essay was a combination of a narrative and informative piece, and again, she met his expectations as she told me later that she had received a final grade of a B on this essay. Similar to her first essay, Dr. Jackson had written positive comments throughout: “nice details,” “interesting conflict,” “nice description,” “helpful details,” “nice explanation,” “informative background.” However, there were four places where he wanted more development (dev): “Good, but slow down a bit. Are both of these pipes?” “Great, but describe a hookah a bit more for us,” “What is possibly immoral about it?” “Good, but can you describe the behavior a bit more?” Each of these comments was not a correction, but rather appeared to push Becky a bit further into her topic with Dr. Jackson using the voice of a counselor. There was one comment that asked for more information, but did not include a proofreading mark: “Are they

actually called ‘dark’ rooms? Why?’ again, simply asking for more information rather than correcting.

This essay had fewer grammar proofreading marks than Essay #1. Dr. Jackson only wrote six proofreading marks, yet there were 13 sections where he wrote in the additions or corrections without a proofreading symbol. The scarcity of his proofreading marks suggest that rather than “correct” Becky, he was offering a way to use college level discourse, in a way similar to how he had offered Kevin the same.

Here we took a ^{seat} ~~sit~~ in black cushioned metal chairs.

The outside no longer looked like a business, but a Hookah Lounge. The place was very ^{influenced} Middle Eastern ^{culture} influenced. Hookah Cafés are mostly operated by Arabic individuals. Indeed, the business was ran by an Arab family. Their heritage could be seen in every inch of the Lounge.

As I looked around I saw a group of three men ^{each} with long hair tied into a ponytail.

Becky did not include the final page with Dr. Jackson’s final remarks when she shared this essay with me, but it is clear by his 15 underlines (evidence of significance), 7 double underlines (good word choice), and 6 boxes (good specific details) on the first five pages of this essay, that Becky was moving closer to college writing and Dr. Jackson recognized her ability to do so.

For Essay #3, Becky wrote about Schizophrenia. This type of writing, as mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, tended to be more difficult for students; however, Becky appeared to be able to meet the expectations more competently than Kevin, as she

received an A- on this essay and he had received a B+. She also had more errors in this essay than the previous two, but apparently, Dr. Jackson gave priority to her ability to handle the content rather than her grammar usage. This essay had 36 underlines (significance), more than twice the underlines in the first two essays. She had 5 double underlines (good word choice) and 11 boxes around words (good specific details).

Dr. Jackson's initial comment was "nice start," and, in side comments throughout the essay, he wrote "helpful point," "interesting ancient example," "useful classification," "clear classification," "important information," and "vivid details." Two of his comments in reference to Becky's use of classification as being *clear* and *useful* were in line with the expectations mentioned in class for this type of essay (see Chapter 3). Her use of these types of definitions indicated a level of engagement and participation during class as she was able to produce an essay using strategies Dr. Jackson had specifically discussed.

Dr. Jackson offered a mixture of positive and corrective comments throughout the essay:

Even though the word "Schizophrenia" has recently been introduced to the medical field, the disease can be first traced in the Bible. In the book of Samuel in the Old Testament, King Saul becomes very paranoid at David's success at defeating Goliath in order to defend the Israelites. David wins other battles afterwards, which leads King Saul to become paranoid. His paranoia leads him to plan for David's death and even ~~off~~ ^{to try to} carrying it out himself (Andreasen 3). King Saul could not tolerate anybody ^{being worse} ~~to be~~ better than him. His paranoia would not allow him to sleep, which caused him to be in more fury as the days progressed.

Interesting ancient example

And in some paragraphs, the only marks were positive:

The symptoms of Schizophrenia are divided into two classifications, the positive and the negative. According to Colburn the positive symptoms include hallucinations, incoherent speech, inappropriate laughter, repetitious language, tears, or rage, while the negative symptoms include toneless voices, expressionless faces or mute and rigid bodies. It is important to note that not all the symptoms will be found in one individual. (Good)

Dr. Jackson's final comments were written in both the voices of the university and the counselor. "Strong unity and development...useful information and helpful exemplification," indicated Becky's ability to meet university expectations for Essay #3. His comments of "There are still a couple of places where coherence could be tightened up a bit more...room for a bit more editing," while being corrective, minimized the level of her errors with the colloquial *a couple of* and the repeated words *a bit*, and in a sense told Becky that she was only "a bit" away from college writing, using the counselor voice of encouragement. His last comment following his advice to do "a bit more editing" -- "But your development is strong" -- shifted the focus of his evaluation back to her competent ability to write this type of essay, explanatory rather than narrative.

The copy of Essay #4 that Becky shared with me was a draft that she had taken to Dr. Jackson's office for review. The topic of the essay was the stages of grief that people went through after losing a loved one and was directly connected to *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer, which was the expectation for this essay (see Chapter 3). Two of Dr. Jackson's

markings were similar to those he would make in his final grading of essays such as corrections in punctuation:

deeply. Carine says that she "can't seem to get through a day without crying" (Krakauer 129).

material would be extremely painful to see in print (Krakauer 205).

But three of the markings gave Becky an opportunity to move closer toward college writing prior to turning in her final draft:

⌈ "Last Sunday, a young hiker, stranded by an injury, was found dead in a remote camp in the Alaskan interior" (Krakauer 98). ^{Explain} Death. Death is the only guaranteed event of our lives.

While on their way to Virginia Beach, Carine asked Chris Fish to stop at their church, "I went in and sat at the altar for an hour or so (Krakauer 130)." Carine was able to find comfort in her faith, even though she was questioning God for Chris's departure from this world. ) ?

acceptance and resignation to the present and their future lives without Chris McCandless and that they were trying their best to move on with their own lives. ^{new paragraph?} The McCandless family became involved in causes that Chris supported. Twenty percent of the royalties sold by the novel would be directed to Chris McCandless Scholarship Foundation (Krakauer 205).



When Dr. Jackson wrote “explain,” “?”,” and “new paragraph” he appeared to be pointing her in the direction of his expectations for this essay. Her participation in the practice of going to office visits both created an opportunity for her to clarify university expectations in her writing and established a relationship with Dr. Jackson in which both he and she were legitimized in their respective roles of University instructor and potential member of this community. While the copy of Essay #4 that she shared with me was not the final graded copy, it did suggest the benefits of her continued participation in the key routine of office visits to provide avenues toward membership in this writing community. She told me later that the final grade on Essay #4 was an A.

### Perspective #3 – Writing as a Member of the College Community

Becky started Freshman Composition less than confident, but ended feeling good about what she had learned and her ability to write. I suggest that much of this came about due to her recognizing the legitimacy of the University and its instructors as authorities on writing, the fostering by Dr. Jackson of Becky as a potential writer, and Becky’s participation in the community’s implied expectations of conversing with the instructor during office visits.

From the beginning, Becky seemed to feel that it was important to know and meet the expectations of her instructors and, after taking the summer class, she felt she had learned what those expectations were. She felt that Dr. Jackson’s expectations lined up with what had been expected in her summer class. She talked about certain vocabulary

that was “expected to be used in universities,” she referred to what “my professor for the summer told me...,” and she referred to the readings from the text book as having “been really helpful...I’m going to go and study and write like that.” Becky had earnestness in her voice as she talked about what she was going to do to meet these expectations, ones she recognized as legitimate towards helping her become a college writer. She also recognized and engaged with Dr. Jackson as a resource.

B: I went to his office hours and he was really helpful and for the essays I was afraid I wasn’t going to be on the topics or follow...

R: You weren’t going to be on topic?

B: Yeah. So I went to his office hours for like the three essays and stuff and he was able to revise or read over it and tell me...give me feedback on if I was right and stuff. And like it really helped because I felt more confident and it was better to take stuff out.

With Becky’s willingness to participate in the practice of going to office visits, she appeared to gain legitimacy from Dr. Jackson as he offered his expertise, feedback, and support, which in turn allowed her to feel more confident in herself as a writer. She may have also developed the sense that he saw her as a potential member in this community so continued to return to his office for support. Becky said, “I think he kind of understands

what I'm saying and stuff," which reflected her acceptance of his help and support as well as her ability to talk to him about her writing.

At the end of the quarter, Becky told me her essay grades were two As, two Bs, and one C and her final grade in the class was a B+, "so I was all happy and stuff." Because she had previously shared with me her grades on Essays #1 - #4 as being two As and two Bs, the C must have been on Essay #5, the final exam. This would have been the only essay for which she would not have been able to talk over a draft with Dr. Jackson prior to handing in the final. On an interesting note, the C on Essay #5 may have suggested that while she had been able to meet the expectations of Dr. Jackson after meeting with him about her drafts, when she had to write without using him as a resource, she struggled to produce essays independently and although the essays written with his help met his expectations, she had not yet fully internalized the expectations of college level writing.

We talked about the classes she would be taking the following quarter and she told me that she was on the waiting list for Freshman Composition 2. She gave a fake groan as she said she "was disappointed cuz that was the only class I was looking forward to." I found this to be an interesting statement from a student who eight weeks earlier had said she was more a "math person" who didn't like to write. While Becky felt she had improved "somewhat," she still thought "I need to get better in my essays and in my writing...and next quarter, next level of writing is something different so I'll have to

work into getting used to other topics...different things.” If not there yet, it appeared that Becky understood what the way would be toward becoming a college writer.

### Key Findings

Becky had had to take a different path than Kevin before being considered ready for college level writing, yet she was able to emerge as a member of the community. Her experiences seemed to reflect three key findings:

- Becky participated in key practices and routines of Freshman Composition 1.
- Through Becky’s participation in the key routine of office visits, she was supported by Dr. Jackson both through his university voice as well as his counselor voice which fostered her legitimacy as a member in this community and her writing scores improved.
- Even though Becky fulfilled the expectations successfully for Freshman Composition 1 and each essay (except Essay #5) was successively more in line with college writing, she did not appear to be able to completely meet Dr. Jackson’s writing expectations when she wrote without his input.

I was able to talk with Becky one last time before the end of the year. She was all smiles. She felt confident in her writing ability and still took advantage of her current instructor and tutoring at the writing center as avenues of access to college writing. She

continued to brainstorm and outline her essays before writing them out. She had had to write for an anthropology class in winter quarter and felt that Freshman Composition had helped her with staying on topic and connecting her paragraphs. Becky appeared to have joined the college writing community.

Becky finished Freshman Composition and satisfied the University's expectation of a C or better grade. She was willing to engage in multiple routines and comply with the expectations in this class and the University. She recognized Dr. Jackson as the authority and a resource to help her gain entrance to the college writing community. Her visits to his office appeared to reinforce her potential as a member. She recognized her own struggles and knew where to go to get help. Even though her essay grades varied, they were high enough to promote a sense of accomplishment at the end of the quarter and she looked forward to her next Freshman Composition class.

Both Becky and Kevin participated in key routines in Freshman Composition 1 and legitimized Dr. Jackson's role as the instructor and used him as a resource to move closer to college writing which in turn fostered their own legitimacy as potential members of the college writing community. The next two focal students' stories are different. Dona did not choose to fully participate in expected routines for this class, but instead brought with her a sense of the expectations of this new community and was able to successfully produce college writing by the quarter's end, thereby becoming a kind of community member. Similar to Dona, Mark did not choose to participate in key

classroom routines, but in contrast to her, he was less than successful in joining this new community. Their stories are discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Story of Dona**

Dona, confident in her ability to produce college level writing and fully participating in the offered avenues of access such as office visits with the instructor, was able to complete the class and satisfy the University's and Dr. Jackson's requirements to move on to the next level.

#### **Entering a New Community**

Dona appeared to understand the expectations for this community. She came to class each session, chatted with her neighbors until Dr. Jackson arrived, and then faced forward with a notebook out and pen ready to take notes as soon as class began. Like Kevin and Becky, Dona appeared to have a sense of student behavior and appeared willing to participate in expected practices.

#### **Background**

Dona is Hispanic. Her grandparents are from Mexico, and her father is full Mexican while her mother is half Mexican and half "white." Dona's comment on her mother's nationality was, "the white part's a bunch of nationalities...German, Polish..." followed by laughter. Her father did not graduate from high school but instead received his GED and went right into the working community. He had worked his way up in the Pepsi Corporation and was now in management. Dona mentioned in our third interview

how hard he had worked yet could go no further in the company as he did not have a college degree. Her mother, the oldest of multiple siblings, had graduated early from high school in order to go to work and help with the family finances. She also took a few classes at a community college and became a nursing assistant, which was her current position.

Unlike Kevin, Dona was the first one in her immediate family to go to a four-year college, which created a certain level of anxiety for her.

I have a half sister and she went to college but we rarely talk to her. But like from my mom's side of the family I am the first and it was really scary because nobody knew anything about it...so I was kinda forced to do everything on my own. Get info on my own and...

Dona's parents were fluent in English and even though it was not their native language, they emphasized the importance of speaking English competently and doing well in school as they saw themselves limited without college degrees. Pushing Dona to do well in school, and ultimately make it to college, was evidence of the value of education in her home.

Dona elaborated on the issue of speaking English correctly during our second formal interview. She talked about how as a child her parents would quickly correct her if she used the English language improperly. Her parents wanted her to avoid embarrassment in elementary school as they believed other students would tease her if she made a mistake. Dona said that much of her motivation for doing well at school was so she wouldn't "embarrass herself or her parents." She mentioned her Uncle's lack of



concern regarding this issue and how she had seen his children, her cousins, teased due to their mispronunciation of English. She was afraid her cousins were in for a difficult time during their schooling experience. Dona also talked about her younger brother who did not do well in school as another source of motivation for her as she attempted to “make up” for his deficiencies as a student.

Dona was originally from the same city as SW University, but had experienced several moves throughout primary and secondary school. She moved away in 3rd grade until after her sophomore year when she moved to a different school district due to her father’s work. She went to a new high school for her junior year, where she took AP Language and Composition. She did well, but, like Kevin, she did not pass the AP Exam. In her senior year, she returned to the school district where she had gone to elementary school and enrolled in AP Literature and Composition but switched out part way through the year as she was feeling overwhelmed by her other AP classes. She admitted that, because she had moved around during her high school years, there was “a lot of struggling...and then a lot of like transitioning...especially with writing...getting adjusted to new teachers.” She elaborated on her struggles in AP English her senior year.

I got in... into Lit class, but the teacher wasn’t really like...I don’t know if it was her style of teaching...I just really didn’t...I don’t know how to explain it.....I was already having a lot of problems with moving and stuff like that and it was just a lot of stress so I was like ok, I’m taking three AP classes right now, I can afford to drop my AP English class. So I did and I went to a regular English class. That teacher didn’t really ask us to write much. It was more of like a “get by” class.

As evidenced by her comments above, Dona did not seem to be one to grant any measure of legitimacy to teachers by virtue of their position. In contrast to Kevin and Becky, she appeared not to recognize her instructors as “all knowing” and sometimes questioned their methods of instruction, an attitude evidenced by her comments that follow. When I asked how prepared she felt for college level writing, she elaborated.

R: Did you feel prepared by your high school teachers for college writing?

D: Honestly, I don't think...(*embarrassed laughter*)

R: You can be honest.

D: I don't really think my teachers prepared me. I think like...I got instruction in writing on my own. They just...they gave me feedback sometimes. I think my sophomore teacher, she's the only one that like gave me feedback. Then all the other teachers kinda didn't care. It was like, ok here's your grade, let's move on to the next topic.

R: They didn't talk to you about what you wrote?

D: [what I wrote] ...or what they wanted in that essay.  
They just said 'write about this in this format.'

Still focusing on the topic of college preparation, we talked about what skills and knowledge she felt she had brought from high school that would help her in college.

- D: From high school....probably the drafting process....like ummm...brainstorming ideas.
- R: Ok. Did you do that a lot in high school?
- D: Yeah, because there were times I didn't know what to write about and I'd sit down and think about it and I'm like, man, you need to have like more than enough stories that you can write about. And just like doing research...(un) when you do research and cite my sources.
- R: What about sentence structure and mechanics and grammar and all of that? Did you feel prepared?
- D: Not so much in high school, but they prepared us early from sixth to eighth grade.
- R: Ok. So they didn't do much of the grammar in high school?
- D: Right, cuz we were already expected to know that by the time we got to high school.
- R: Ok. And did you?
- D: Yeah.

Dona's attitude toward her high school instructors was evident by her comments: "...they didn't really ask us to write much," "...other teachers didn't care," "I don't think my teachers prepared me." I suggest that she brought this same feeling to Freshman Composition 1 and wasn't expecting to view Dr. Jackson as a writing resource, which may have limited her desire to fully participate in this community. As she mentioned, she

was used to getting information on her own so didn't appear to be dependent on her instructors for direction.

Even though Dona's experiences in high school appeared to be more "hit and miss" than focused in terms of writing instruction, and she had experienced some difficulties when she changed schools, she did not seem to be overly concerned about her ability to write at the college level. When I asked Dona if she felt she was going to be a successful writer in college, she said "I hope so. I mean...I think I'm ok now. I think I'll make it."

Dona was concerned about her grades, as I show in her comments later in this chapter, and it was clear that, to her, her education was a priority. Her access to college routines and practices may have been limited as her parents were not college educated, in contrast to Kevin's access through his parents and siblings. However, similar to both Kevin and Becky, she appeared to recognize the value of a college education and what it could buy her in terms of her future. Dona's past educational experiences and attitudes appeared to affect her level of participation and willingness to engage in the community routines and practices as well as the level of legitimacy she was willing to grant to both the University and Dr. Jackson.

#### Repertoires/Routines/Participation

Dona did not engage in the contemporary routines of technology use in the classroom, but instead was more traditional in her approach with notebook, pencil, and

textbook balanced on her desk. She appeared to be attentive during class, seemingly taking notes and copying down whatever Dr. Jackson wrote on the board and occasionally joining in with other students in choral responses. When in a group or working with a partner, she would sit with either the textbook or draft being discussed before her and engage in animated conversations with her peers. Sometimes she would erupt in spontaneous laughter. Whether the conversation was centered on the assigned task or not was not clear. She attended every class, was never late, and never left early. While she chose not to participate fully in the community as she did not visit Dr. Jackson for individual help, this did not appear to stymie her ability to produce college level writing as she appeared to already have a sense of what was expected.

#### Expectations and Challenges

Dona and I talked about her expectations regarding college level writing. One of her expectations was based on what she'd heard in high school.

D: I heard college writing is a lot different than high school writing.

R: What have you heard? That interests me.

D: I heard that... it's more...they expect more pages...

R: Ok, so it's longer. They expect more.

D: That's going to be hard...like not repeat yourself. You have to come up with fresh ideas for your paragraphs.

As Kevin had mentioned in an interview, Dona also expected to have to write a longer paper than in high school and, similar to Becky, she was concerned about writing without repeating herself or her ideas. Dona appeared to recognize that college writing had different expectations than high school writing and as she had not felt prepared by her high school teachers, she appeared to feel a little anxious. However, this concern did not appear to play out in her ability to produce writing for Dr. Jackson. Even though her concern was about page length as Dr. Jackson had asked for at least three pages for the currently assigned essay, she told me that her draft was already “five, nearly six, pages.” So she displayed a certain willingness to participate as a college writer enough to fulfill Dr. Jackson’s expectations and beyond, at least in terms of number of pages.

When I asked about her expectations for a successful college writer in general, her comments referred to the overall appeal and credibility of one’s writing. “Probably you enjoy reading what they write...makes experience enjoyable. They seem knowledgeable, they know what they’re talking about...They support any of their facts and their opinions.” Interestingly, she did not comment about any structural issues but more about the overall content of a written piece. This may have been in response to what had been discussed in class prior to our conversation. Dr. Jackson had had the students read four short essays from the *Elements of Writing* and he had led a class discussion about how each narrative was a “well told story with vivid description and indicated significance” (see Chapter 3). On this day, Dr. Jackson did not focus on grammar structures but instead

focused on the content of the essays. Dona's comment concerning expectations of a successful writer seemed to legitimize the conversation in class.

Our conversation turned to specific challenges she was facing in Freshman Composition 1.

R: What kinds of challenges do you face in this class so far?

D: Hmmm. In this class, I think in giving structure, you have to hit these points and these points.

R: Ok, so you think he gives you too much structure?

D: Ummm...I wouldn't say it's too much; it's just more than I'm used to. He wants illustrations included...and the significance. But I mean like that's part of writing a story, I think.

R: Right.

D: You have to include those things. But I don't know. What I consider descriptive he may not consider so descriptive, so I think that's an issue too.

Dona's experience of just "get by" classes in high school may have led to her concern about the structure that was expected in Dr Jackson's class as strict as this was not her experience in high school. She seemed to be expressing a feeling of being unprepared for the demands of this particular instructor. But then, she referred to it all as being "part of

writing a story.” So while Dr. Jackson was asking for more than her high school teachers, she was willing to accept that it as an appropriate and obvious expectation.

Importantly, Dona, along with Kevin, was concerned that Dr. Jackson understand what she was trying to get across in her writing as she attempted to meet his expectations. She also expressed a concern that her *interpretation* of what he wanted would not match his. This concern and desire suggested that she did recognize Dr. Jackson as the authority and she would try and write the way he asked, even though she may not have agreed with how he presented his expectations for essays. As a writer, she appeared to desire the freedom to write how she wanted, without multiple restrictions, but was concerned that her writing would not be legitimized by Dr. Jackson. She seemed to realize “that you have to include those things,” but still saw that as an “issue.” Although she understood the elements of a narrative according to Dr. Jackson, she would have rather written under her own terms.

I then asked her how she planned to address some of these concerns.

D: So if it’s too much structure, if this one (*Essay #1*) was really delineated for you, what did you do to get around that?

D: I...

R: Or how did you make it work for you?

D: I redrafted my essay a lot (*laughter*).

R: You did. A lot of redrafts?



D: Yeah...ummm...probably like five different times. On the computer, I just kept rereading it and rereading it and comparing it to like the text book...

R: mmmhmmm.

D: Ok, if this is what he is making us read, then this is kind of what he's looking for...

Dona recognized the authority of the University, instructor, and textbook. She participated in writing practices by comparing her own writing to mentor texts, evidence that she was attempting to produce the type of writing that would be considered legitimate according to the expectations of this community. This skill of revision was also an explicit expectation for a college writer emphasized during a class session when Dr. Jackson had read a student draft and talked about various ideas for revision (see Chapter 3). During her revision process, she appeared to draw upon her ability to figure things out for herself. Rather than draw upon Dr. Jackson's individual input during an office visit, she instead rewrote her paper five times using the textbook as the resource. I would argue that her desire was to do it correctly to garner Dr. Jackson's approval of her as a potential college writer and legitimate member of this community -- but to do so on her own.

At the end of our first interview, she made a final comment regarding perceived challenges in college writing, and her self-confidence in her ability to become a viable member of this community was evident. She said, "I actually think it's going smoother

than I thought it would be...I was really nervous when they gave us the entrance exam... and when I found out I got placed in this class, I'm like maybe it's not as hard as I thought." Even though, according to Dona, she did not come to Freshman Composition fully prepared for college writing, she came with a sense of herself as an independent writer. When she was legitimized by the University on her entrance exam as ready for this community, it appeared to foster her willingness to participate in this class as a writer, but only to the extent that she maintain a certain independence as well. Finding this class not as hard as she had expected, she didn't appear to feel the need to rely on Dr. Jackson as a resource, and instead took it upon herself to teach herself, "get info on my own," on how to meet the demands of this community of writers.

The next time we talked, it was the seventh week of the ten-week quarter. Dona arrived flustered and out of breath. It took a few minutes for her to collect herself and I asked if she was ok. Wiping a tear from her face, she explained to me that she had just come from the counseling center to talk with a counselor regarding a test she had just failed in another class. She was very concerned about her grade and was seeking help. Multiple classrooms, multiple communities to balance are surely other factors that add to the complexity of the freshman experience (see Chapter 1). We just chatted for a few minutes so she could calm down. After some casual conversation, she took a deep breath, straightened her skirt, and said she was ready to begin our interview.

I started this conversation by playing back for her some of the responses she gave regarding the challenges and expectations she had had the first few weeks of school. She didn't feel that much had changed other than she felt she had adapted to the instructor and was beginning to "like him better now" than she did at the beginning of the quarter. Even though she was not completely satisfied with her grades on her first two essays, both Bs, she did not feel the need to go to the instructor's office hours. Also, while she clearly did not appear to feel the class to be overwhelming, she did express some frustration at the instructor's grading system. On the homework assignments, a series of questions related to assigned reading, she had received checks rather than check pluses, and she wanted to know why. There was no written feedback on these assignments and that was a source of frustration for her. As for changes in her writing, she said she was "putting more thought into her papers, making outlines, and doing more research" before she started to write. Dona was beginning to adopt the expected routines of this community, acting like a member, and felt better about herself as a college writer but knew she still needed work. She wanted As on her papers.

Our third and final interview was at the end of the tenth week of class. I asked again about challenges in the class, how she had met those challenges, and her current perception of herself as a college level writer. I reminded Dona what she had listed as challenges in the beginning -- too much structure, need for description, significance, and fresh ideas -- and asked if these had remained or if any new challenges had emerged.

R: So you've been in this class for a quarter...so how do you feel about these challenges now? Are they still there? Are you still working with them or are there new challenges you didn't expect?

D: I think they're still there. I think I deserved an A on that last paper. And was like .4 away from getting an A.

R: What was it? An 89.6?

D: No...yeah...it was like an 88 and like if I would have got that .4, I would have got an A. Got an 88. I was so sad.

Even though Dona said she thought the same challenges existed now as in the beginning, she was seemingly unaware that she had added a new challenge to the mix. Her focus had switched from specific writing structures and attributes to her grades. Her challenge now appeared to be to receive evaluations of her writing that she felt she deserved. While she recognized the legitimacy of the writing instruction and Dr. Jackson, as evidenced by her willingness to revise and meet specific expectations for the essays, she appeared to cling to her own evaluation of her writing as valid, which differed from Dr. Jackson's.

Further on in our conversation, she was able to articulate a new challenge that had to do with the organization of her papers.

Well, mine's more organization. I think I'm more frustrated because mine isn't a problem that can be easily fixed. So I'll go back and read his comments and be more aware of what he's trying to tell me to do. Or my outlines will be more detailed now.

When Dona talked about going back and reading Dr. Jackson's comments and trying to meet his expectations, she was participating as a functioning member of this community and adopting expected practices. However, when she classified her problem as one that can't be "easily fixed," she appeared to be saying that Dr. Jackson's comments and suggestions may not be sufficient to address her problem and it would have to be dealt with at a later date with another instructor in another class. "I'll tackle this organization problem in Freshman Composition 2." She did not appear overly concerned about this issue with her writing and was seemingly dismissive of trying to solve this during this quarter. She just felt that it was something on which she'd keep working.

Dona appeared to waver between recognizing Dr. Jackson's authority and knowledge and using him as a resource versus figuring things out for herself. She appeared to understand the value of the University education and knew she needed to keep working on her writing, but did not seem to feel the need to rely on Dr. Jackson in order to do this. While she expressed some concern about meeting his expectations, she summed up her experience at the end of the quarter:

They (*high school teachers*) try to scare you and when you come to college, you're like this isn't even bad. I think it kind of makes you slack off a little. I'm not going to lie. Because you're like it's easy. They scared us for nothing.

Her feeling of being "scared for nothing" seemed to illustrate her belief that college writing was not something unattainable, and in fact, she had already proven herself to be a competent college writer.

### **Dona's writing**

During the course of the quarter, while Dona was eager to share her experiences when we talked, she was not forthcoming with her final graded essays. She shared a draft of Essay #1 and #2, and the final graded copy of Essay #4. She did not bring me a copy of Essay #3. At the beginning of two separate class sessions after I had asked about the missing essays, she looked at me, smiled apologetically and said she had forgotten to bring them again. After the second time, it appeared that she was not interested in sharing them with me. I do not know her reasons.

## Essay #1

7 October 2011

### The Best Enemy

The innocence of elementary school still intrigues me when I drive past the building I once spent my weekdays in as a child. It was so easy for everyone to get along with one another throughout our youth because our pure minds saw no prejudices or handicaps while choosing our friends. I always contemplate why our perception of others corrupts so wickedly with age, and when I think of this, I am reminded of my traumatic middle school experiences as an outcast. Unfortunately, my social decline occurred through a series of multiple incidents, but I will never forget the person who stood in the center of the chaos with a casual grin expressing how indifferent she felt towards the pain she caused.

█████ left a strong impression on me from the moment we first met. We were nine years old and attended the same Gifted and Talented Education class together although we went to different elementary schools. The rest of the children in the classroom chattered about starting a new school year in the small town of the ██████████, but I fixed my eyes upon ██████ in faded jeans paired with a cozy red sweater usually worn by boys who played in the Pop Warner football league. She sat alone in a chair and concentrated deeply on a worksheet we were asked to complete. Her blonde hair sat plainly on her shoulders and she caressed her jacket sleeves gently. As I walked over to her, I was particularly intrigued by her tomboyish style because, to my knowledge at the time, boys were generally interested in girls wearing gender-specific

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clothing like dresses. I prepared a series of questions to ask ██████████; however I barely mustered up enough courage to ask one:

"Hey whose jacket are you wearing?"

My heart raced with anxiety after I realized my question sounded too blunt and had a rude undertone. Nonetheless, ██████████ looked at me with her bright brown eyes and flashed a proud smile.

"It's ██████████. Why don't you know who he is?"

We bonded for the first time in this moment. It used to sadden me during the instances it appeared we were no longer this close in the years that followed. Gradually I learned in middle school ██████████ and I were never truly friends in the first place.

My seventh grade school year was disastrous. I did not feel comfortable with myself in any aspect and therefore became extremely self-conscious about my body. None of the clothes I wore helped improve the perception of myself because I struggled constantly with my weight. I somehow forgot I was an amazing young woman and obsessed over the awkward changes I viewed daily in the mirror. By the time I began eighth grade, other students noticed the same changes.

It was a hot September day when I found out about the rumors. My tears fell slowly and I wished someone would see me standing alone, defeated, by my locker and offer to confront everyone who contributed to my anguish. No one came to my rescue. I had no choice but to dismiss any accusations aimed towards me to the best of my abilities, then accept I could not trust a single person.



The rumors first stemmed from immature questions about the “realness” of my breasts and ultimately developed into more severe accusations of anorexia and bulimia. For these reasons, I was outcasted and spent most of my time hating myself and absorbing all the blame, though I did nothing wrong. Walking into school each morning while hundreds of fierce stares analyzed my every move sickened me. My legs weakened as I walked further and my eyes stung with the strongest desire to burst into tears. I wanted to give up. Whatever my peers wanted to accomplish by breaking down my spirit, I was willing to exchange for a life of normalcy and acceptance. Then one day desperation turned into anger. I could not handle the period of depression any longer, so I decided to seek out the person who started all the rumors and single-handedly managed to rob me of a functional life. My search caused me to engage in my first physical fight and also become cornered by a large cluster of girls threatening to jump me. I did not care about what would happen to me at this point. I just wanted to discover who was ruining my life and force the person to undo the damage. However, my plan became much more intricate when the culprits were revealed as ██████████ and a few of my former best friends. Being so young, I could not yet comprehend such heartbreak; but there was comfort in thinking I reached the climax of my life’s downward spiral.

I used my Thanksgiving break as time to recuperate from drama and repair some of my friendships with individuals who held the least amount of responsibility in contributing to my social isolation. I was ready to exercise a new outlook on life and reintroduce myself as a stronger person when school resumed.

There was a noticeable change in the atmosphere the day I returned to school. My mood was optimistic and gleeful, accompanied by a confidence I refused to let anyone destroy. I met

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up with my small group of friends in front of our adjacent lockers and immediately noticed a startling somberness apparent on all their faces.

"Why does everyone look so down?" I inquired as an attempt to start a conversation.

Not a single person spoke or made eye contact with me until one outspoken girl decided to break the silence.

"Didn't you hear?"

My forehead wrinkled in confusion.

"Hear about what? Just tell me please."

"██████████ She died during the break."

I released a highly inappropriate nervous giggle, expecting her to admit she was joking. When every girl refused to make eye contact with me again, I knew her statement was confirmed true.

My heart was heavy and I assumed it was my conscience responding politely by expressing empathy for the loss of a life. Within my private thoughts, I instead felt relief. For the next few weeks I struggled with the toughest internal conflict I ever knew. How does one mourn the death of a person who, metaphorically, took life away? This was especially difficult to internalize when I witnessed how beloved ██████████ was by teachers and within the community. Her name and face were plastered on t-shirts, bracelets, car stickers, and I received her memorial hot pink bracelet days before her funeral.

My fingers slid over her name imprinted on the plastic. I had to wear the bracelet because everyone loved her. It seemed pathetic to exclude myself from the crowd because I was the only person who disliked her.

I attended [REDACTED] funeral in a building filled beyond capacity, yet still felt alone in my thoughts. The overwhelming amount of people showing their support for her family belittled me. The same sentence repeated inside my head:

*"If you only knew... If you only knew..."*

I carried such a heavy burden of guilt and anger since that day. All my peers knew what she did to me, but I could no longer talk about it because she was dead and it is taboo to speak ill of those who have passed on. All the introverted pain haunted me for years until a friend divulged one of her darkest secrets to me our senior year of high school.

"She always made fun of how dark my skin was and called me offensive names. It hurt really badly but I didn't wanna tell anyone, you know? I would've felt ashamed."

I sensed her sadness and thanked her for confiding in me. Other girls overheard our conversation, knew who we were referring to, then revealed their own stories about being bullied by [REDACTED] and her best friend. We were united and began our own processes of healing. In reflection, we collectively decided one cannot hold an individual at fault for mistakes made at the age of thirteen. People grow and undergo character improvements throughout the span of life.

I refuse to let myself wonder if [REDACTED] and I would have remained enemies if a tragic accident did not claim her life. My forgiveness is not conditional and I came to the conclusion I

[REDACTED]

may owe her a few apologies myself. I said goodbye to [REDACTED] the day she was carried away in  
her casket, and all my grudges are buried beside her. Maybe one day we will sit together again  
and I will listen attentively as she describes what she thinks of [REDACTED] and his football  
jacket now since so many other girls have worn it.

## Essay #2

24 October 2011

### Santa Cruz and Sandy Blues

I playfully bury my feet under small mounds of sand and take a deep breath as I stare at the landscape of the Santa Cruz Beach for the last time. I have never seen sand as light as the grains that stretch over a mile long perimeter at this location bordering the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The weather is unusually arid this particular day during July 2010 and the enthusiastic shrieks from children on the boardwalk a short distance behind me mingle with the roaring of the ocean's waves crashing on top of one another. The waves approach me rhythmically, a routine that makes me become entranced in my own thoughts filled with my last memory I spent on this beach. I finished celebrating Independence Day happily only days ago, but now I am filled with somberness. I am moving hundreds of miles away from this beloved beach next weekend and it saddens me because I created treasured memories with someone I loved on this exact site and I will no longer be able to relive the moments by visiting it frequently.

I hear a plastic bag being rustled near my right side and I turn abruptly to see a couple throwing away the remains of their picnic into a trash bin. Examining the general area around the couple, I notice the beach is remarkably clean in its entirety. I originally thought this was due to the growing concern visitors had for the environment, but the uniformed individuals inspecting the outer perimeter of the boardwalk while picking up occasional loose pieces of garbage suggested otherwise. In fact, owners of the Santa Cruz Beach boardwalk purposely hire more

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workers during the spring and summer seasons in order to conduct daily clean ups. These two specific seasons are the beach and boardwalk's busiest periods, therefore initiative is taken to ensure less trash makes it way to the ocean.

I live approximately an hour away from this beach, so I am constantly hearing all the radio advertisements and seeing printed articles about how eco-friendly the boardwalk has become. Its updated website even boasts about the recognition state and local organizations have honored the owners with, such as the 1995 "Ecology Action Environmental Business of the Year" and "Santa Cruz County Sustainable Quality" Awards. In addition, the most recent award named the Boardwalk a city of Santa Cruz's "Clean Ocean Business", which has reoccurred every year since 2004. All the "Environmental Preservation" programs and efforts managed by the boardwalk's proprietors makes me proud to know the place I enjoy visiting cares about more than just turning out a profit.

I stretch my arms above my head and try to remember if the beach and boardwalk were this clean the last time I visited in May. I assume it was, yet my memory is foggy because the only part I focused on during my last trip here was how the person I was with increased my perception of the beach's beauty. I fell in love on this beach and I partially blame the comforting atmosphere.

May 2010 was supposed to be the most active the boardwalk had been in years. Large amounts of concerts were scheduled and a new ride was set to be opened to the public during this time. I attended spontaneously with boy named ██████████ and since it was my first time visiting the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, I was stunned. The complete view of the architecture and crowd was attractive, and an impulse to make the best of the few hours I would spend here was


created within me. We arrived mid-day and decided to immediately ride as many attractions as possible.

Andy and I laughed constantly even though the swiftness of each ride left us breathless. We followed the dimming horizon in a parallel manner until [REDACTED] stopped precisely in front of an intimidating roller coaster. It was the boardwalk's oldest roller coaster, "The Giant Dipper". I was frightened because this particular ride was originally constructed nearly 100 years ago. Of course, adjustments and tune-ups are conducted periodically to maintain California state code standards, but nonetheless, the ride was daunting. The roller coaster creaked when we sat in our small cabin and continued to do so throughout the rest of the ride.

Apparently other people love to feel the rush of an unstable attraction because "The Giant Dipper" became the most popular ride after it's unveiling in 1924. In 2007, it accumulated an estimated amount of 55 million riders. At this time it occurred to me that if so many individuals visited the boardwalk for a roller coaster, they definitely were also compelled to step foot on the beautiful beach. [REDACTED] and I stumbled to exit the roller coaster then decided to finally turn our attention to the coast.

The crunching of the sand beneath our feet had a calming effect on me as we made our way to the shore from the boardwalk. Neither of us could resist the beckoning of the water because it tumbled towards us eagerly. I watched [REDACTED] cuff his pant legs below his knees and then proceed to kick waves with his bare feet. In this moment, I too wanted to feel the chill of the frigid ocean water against my skin.

"There's just something about this place that makes me feel happy and at peace," I said softly as my gaze drifted towards sail boats disappearing into the skyline.

"Yes, I already know. You love the beach. But you know you have to share it with everyone else right?"  then smiled and the beach responded with a cool mist that flew past both of our faces.

His comment was mocking and playful, but made perfect sense to me. My experience here was not original, yet the emotions it created were not devalued. I looked up at the sky and noticed I had never seen such a lively shade of blue. It appeared to mirror the water, making the entire experience feel mystical.

Even on that brisk May evening so long ago, I could not comprehend leaving a place I loved so dearly even if my experiences could be replicated by anyone else. A place with such a grand amount of history deserves respect. I not only witnessed the beach's beauty, but millions of people have created impressionable memories here as well. I walked in their sandy footprints each time I visited and was also greeted by the same majestic ocean that befriended vast quantities of strangers.

A seagull soars above my head, squawks, and brings me back into the present. I am finished reminiscing about the moments I once had here because my emotions are becoming oddly mixed anyway. I sit in the sand and curl my knees up to my chest. The sun is setting over the boardwalk and beach that came from modest beginnings as a bathhouse. It is now a thriving destination with the power to manipulate moods simply with its appeal.

Today I learn it is okay to leave behind the people and places I love because I will still carry the experiences that brought me joy close to my heart. The Santa Cruz Beach will securely remain in its location, and I am confident I will be able to visit it again one day since it has been the last existing seaside amusement park on the west coast for many years now.



From this day forward, when I tread through the sand of any other beach, I will remind myself that life needs balance between the moments that first break down hopes, then build them back up. The wild water and stable sand complement each other in the same manner.

I stand and prepare to leave Santa Cruz. As I take my last view of the landscape I adore so deeply, I also leave behind my source of tranquility. Part of me insists on crying for the tender moments I will never be able to relive, yet instead I smile with regard to the experiences I had here that made me appreciate life. With my back turned, I hear the ocean bid me goodbye with intensifying waves while the sun fully vanishes somewhere beyond the horizon.

Essay #4

21 November 2011

Generational Conflict

Nice start

During my teenage years spent at home, the only way my mother and I could communicate was through violent yelling and we sometimes even ignored each other for an entire week. I once thought this occurred because we simply did not like each other, but slowly learned the cause is much more deep and complex. My mother and I fought because we experienced an intense oedipal conflict, similar to what Chris McCandless and his father Walt faced as described by Jon Krakauer in the book *Into the Wild*.

Nice connection to novel.

Oedipal conflicts gained popularity when Sigmund Freud chose this ^{term} topic as the basis for some of his psychoanalytic theories ("Oedipus - Ancient Greece"). According to Freud, the conflict occurs when a child gains a sexual interest in a parent of the opposite sex and is usually resolved through identifying with the parent of the same sex (Feldman 382). However, modern definitions illustrate the conflict differently. An oedipal conflict is now viewed as a reflection of self between a parent and child of the same gender and is the most common explanation for generational conflicts (Feldman 382). The concept of reflection of self does not discriminate between genders and can occur in relationships with parents and children of all ages.

Clear definition.

~ does not lead to conflict? (clear)

An example of self reflection (w)

A self-reflection exemplification occurs after Chris McCandless expresses his dislike towards his father Walt for reasons such as ^{his} overindulgence ⁱⁿ of wealth and ^{his} slightly corrupted morals (Krakauer 19-21). Chris cannot stand the things Walt has done in the past like leaving

Good example.

jobs with promise and cheating on his mother, so he becomes upset with his father and suppresses his anger. Carine, Chris's sister, states years later that Chris and Walt were alike in their ways of stubbornness (Krakauer), and it is likely Chris came to this same conclusion himself and actually realized more similarities he shared with his father. When Chris saw the reflection of himself within Walt's life, he became frightened subconsciously and took drastic measures to ensure his life would have a different outcome once he grew older. Next, Chris ventures into the wilderness and burns his money to symbolically distance himself from the material world his father belongs to and creates an alter-ego, Alexander Supertramp, (Krakauer) to represent the new life he is trying to rebuild.

(ans).  
clear  
explanation

I understand these actions conducted by Chris due to the relationship with my mother since self-reflection knows no gender boundaries. Our many arguments were occasionally pointless, but before I left for college I realized my resentment for my mother originated from her past. Unlike Walt, my mother was always faithful to her spouse, yet I believed she acted just as poorly. She allowed herself to be treated unfairly by my father for years and, though I still love him dearly, I felt she was a weak woman for staying in an unhealthy marriage. I was frightened after I gained consciousness of this idea because I viewed my mother as an image of what I did not want my life to mirror; a broken relationship in which I would still feel alone and deprived. I then proceeded to treat her badly because I thought she, and I, deserved a much more fulfilling life.

Very helpful specific example.  
Clear explanation

Intriguingly, the tables did turn during a few instances. Self-reflection is not a one-way concept (Burgo), so my mother saw a younger self within me just as Walt McCandless saw himself within Chris. I know she punished me so strictly when I misbehaved because she made the same mistakes and did not want me to suffer through the consequences like she was forced to

Important point.

do. Parents try to protect their children as much as possible and they get frustrated as well when we do not live up to our potential. It is not only the children who put their parents upon a pedestal. When someone becomes a parent, they create dreams and imagine a bright future for their child and become disappointed when a different life path is chosen. My mother and Walt had great plans for their children, but Chris and I are alike because we do not wish to live our lives according to our parents' plans. We are free spirits and aspire to learn life lesson on our own through exploration.

Can you try a bit more about health plans (what)

Chris and I also ^{share} differences in our oedipal conflicts. When I saw an older self as I looked at my mother, I directly confronted her about the faults I disliked about her. Our fights then solely became a contest to see which individual could point out the most character flaws and we both eventually realized our criticisms were not entirely incorrect. We sat down weeks later and attempted to talk through our problems after noticing the ways in which we needed to change. Although this was not always effective, it was a much healthier way to solve our disagreements than the method chosen by the McCandless men.

Good point! But better earlier

Chris insulated all the hostility he felt towards Walt and the problems were never acknowledged. In fact, Walt even declares he knew nothing about his son's dislike for him even though their relationship was "courteous" after Chris graduated from high school (Krakauer 120-21). It was said that Chris tends to "see things in black and white" (Krakauer 122), therefore he could not forgive his father for his shortcomings because he could only concentrate on the ethical offenses Walt had committed. Over time all Chris's bitterness accumulated, though he would not voice his opinions, and I believe this is why he embarked on an adventure into the wild. However, I am also certain Chris thought his trip was only temporary and would have returned as soon as he thought he was rid of the characteristics he shared with Walt.

is the earlier

Chris did indeed try to return back to civilization, but his path was obstructed by a flooded river. He was subsequently forced to turn back towards the bus he camped out in for months, where he later died (Krakauer 169). Now Walt McCandless has no answers to the questions surrounding the welfare of his relationship with his son since Chris cannot talk about the problems that bothered him. It is difficult enough for one to find out they have lost a child, but even more hurtful to discover the child did not enjoy the parent-child bond that was created.

If Chris had survived his ordeal in Alaska, his relationship would have improved with his father, though not significantly, but enough to encourage more communication. The main reason why Chris and I had strained relationships with our parents when we were younger was due to the adolescent process of finding one's identity. Therefore, our oedipal conflicts arose during the earliest times of our youth because we had not yet found ourselves as individuals.

Argument point.

how does my relationship experience with my father justify this (idea)

This struggle is often resolved with the wisdom of age, which is why I am sure Chris and Walt would have worked things out years after Chris's Alaskan adventure. Chris would have realized his judgment of his father was too harsh since Walt is no longer the same man he once was, and in turn, Walt would have come to accept Chris strong-willed tendencies. Time heals most wounds created through unfavorable actions though it does not erase hurtful words that were said.

Even now, as the fights with my mother have long passed, I am still in the process of forgiving her. Sometimes I contemplate the many ways I need to first forgive myself for the way I treated her, then I remind myself that individuals have the power to change their own futures. Although it is true I saw an older self in my mother at one point, I am still determined to strive for more satisfying options than she chose for herself. My mother must have also let go of the majority of her hopes for me that I could not fulfill, but I am proud to say I am not a

Appropriate use of words.

complete disappointment to her in any momentous way. I have not purposely made good choices to please her, but to instead ensure I am living a comfortable life with good prospects.

It is clear to me now that there will forever be an oedipal conflict present in not only my relationship with my mother, but also in the relationships of other parents and children around the world, including Walt and Chris McCandless. The intensity of the conflict may become stifled and lessen with time, however it never disappears completely. To regulate the strength of the conflict, an individual must prioritize their will to create a solution and then communicate about the major dilemmas. Relationships will forever require maintenance and an oedipal conflict commands the same respect.

Logical conclusion.

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Your basic strategy in this essay is very effective. You do a good job of synthesizing your reading and your experience. And you do a very good job of maintaining your focus. See my suggestions for improving organization & development a bit more.

(B+)

Perspective #1 – The University’s Rubric

Table 8

*Dona’s Essay Scores by Three Readers*

---

University entrance exam	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #4
<b>10</b>	1 st Rdr - 5	1 st Rdr - 5	1 st Rdr - 5
	2 nd Rdr - 4	2 nd Rdr - 5	2 nd Rdr - 5
	3 rd Rdr - 4	3 rd Rdr - 5	3 rd Rdr - 4
	Avg - <b>4.3</b>	Avg - <b>5</b>	Avg - <b>4.6</b>

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*Note:* Scoring based on a 6-point scale and scores in bold are the averaged scores of all three readers; “Rdr” stands for Reader; “Avg” stands for Average.

Table 8 shows Dona’s scores as reflected on the University rubric. As previously mentioned, I had no input other than the final score. Dona received a 10 out of a possible 12 on the entrance writing exam. Her approach to the prompt was detailed and complete. She used a personal anecdote to illustrate the focus of the prompt and finished with moral advice connected to her learning. Her vocabulary was sophisticated and precise and



included words such as *remnants, encountered, conversed, maturation*. According to the University, she was ready for college level writing.

Dona's Essay #1, a narrative, told of an event that she experienced during Middle School. The essay opened with a philosophical statement about the naïve views of youth and then illustrated in detail the event and elaborated with "appropriate examples and sensible reasoning." She included several reflective comments regarding the significance of the event, an element of narrative writing emphasized by Dr. Jackson during class (see Chapter III). I gave this essay a 5. The second reader gave it a 4 with the comment, "some awkward diction, but follows assignment." The third reader also gave it a 4.

Essay #2 was to be a profile of a person, place, or event. She wrote about a beach close to where she grew up and her last visit there before leaving for college. Her response was "thoughtful" and "clearly competent," and "elaborated the response with appropriate examples and sensible reasoning." She also demonstrated her ability to "choose words accurately, vary sentences effectively" while observing English conventions. All three readers gave it a 5 and the second reader wrote "good detail; few errors."

The purpose of Essay #4 was to identify a theme in the novel *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer in order to help the reader develop a deeper understanding of the book. Her topic was the oedipal conflict that occurred between the main character and his father. Similar to Essay #2, this was another well-written paper in which Dona

thoughtfully responded to the text. She included personal connections and outside resources that helped to explain and define her topic. Her writing had very few errors. I gave the essay a 5. The second reader gave it a 5 as well, with the comments “good diction; closely follows the assignment.” The essay received a 4 from the third reader.


In all three of essays, Dona demonstrated her ability to competently respond to a prompt, sufficiently support her claims, and elaborate with details and evidence of significance. Similar to Kevin and according to the University rubric, Dona was able to produce writing in line with college level expectations.

Perspective #2 – The Instructor’s

Table 9

*Dr. Jackson’s proofreading marks on Dona’s Essay #4*

Proof reading mark/symbol	Essay #4
✓	0
☆	0
_____	44
=====	10
□	1

 (squiggly line under word(s))	0
Agr	0
Coh	0
Comp	0
CS	0
Dev	3
Dig	0
Exact	0
Frag	0
Lc	0
Logic	0
Mixed	0
Num	0
Ref	0
Shift	0
T	0
Trans	0
Usage	0
Voice	0
W	1

Wc	0
Ww	0

Essay #4 was the only essay Dona gave me that included Dr. Jackson’s proofreading marks and comments. This essay demonstrated how, near the end of the quarter, Dona had maintained her competency at being able to produce college level writing. Dr. Jackson saw her work positively. His initial comment was “nice start,” followed by almost all positive remarks: “nice connection to the novel,” “clear definition,” “good example,” “helpful specific example,” “important point,” “good point,” (his underline), “appropriate use of example,” and “logical conclusion.” He had underlined 44 phrases/sentences and double underlined 10 words as indicators of significance/reflection and good word choice. His comments were directly related to the in-class instruction about how to approach Essay #4 (see Chapter 3). He had told the students to bring in “personal connections,” which Dona had done in the first paragraph. He had also emphasized the concept of “not confusing the reader,” and with his comments that used the words *clear*, *very helpful*, *important*, and *logical*, he appeared to recognize Dona’s ability to meet his expectations for this essay.

There were only two word-choice proofreading marks (wc) and one wordy (w) mark.

~~However~~ ^{display (we)}  
Chris and I also share differences in our oedipal conflicts.

---

^{Therefore (we)}  
older. Next, Chris ventures into the wilderness.

---

An example of self-reflection (w)  
A self-reflection exemplification occurs after.

The other three marks addressed the need for more development of an idea (dev.): “How does reflection lead to conflict?” “Can you say a bit more about Walt’s plans?” and “How does Jon Krakauer’s own experience with his father amplify this?”

The rest of Dr. Jackson’s marks were not accompanied by proofreading marks, his University voice, but instead were more in line with his counselor voice, suggestions to help her with her writing. This was similar to what Dr. Jackson had done for Kevin in his Essay #4 as well.

towards his father Walt for reasons such as ^{his} ~~an~~ overindulgence ⁱⁿ of wealth and ^{his} slightly corrupted morals (Krakauer 19-21). Chris cannot stand the things Walt has done in the past like leaving

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It is clear to me now that there will forever be an oedipal conflict present in not only my relationship with my mother, but also in the relationships of other parents and children around the world, including Walt and Chris McCandless. The intensity of the conflict may become stifled and lessen with time, however it never disappears completely. To regulate the strength of the conflict, an individual must prioritize their will to create a solution and then communicate about the major dilemmas. Relationships will forever require maintenance and an oedipal conflict commands the same respect.

Logical  
conclusion.

Twice Dr. Jackson added the page number to Dona's in text citation and once he circled the word "topic" and wrote above it, "term." Otherwise, there were minimal corrections or proofreading marks on Dona's essay.

Dr. Jackson's final comments included the terms "very effective," "good job of synthesizing your reading and your experience," and "very good job of maintaining your focus." Clearly, Dona was not one of the students whom Dr. Jackson had been thinking of when he said that "engaging with the text was an alien experience" for them (see Chapter 3). His only "suggestion" in these comments was in reference to "improving organization and development a bit more." His use of *suggestion* and *a bit more*, supporting rather than criticizing words, appeared to be from a counselor pushing a student closer to the expectations, rather than a University instructor, correcting. He seemed to approach Dona as someone who understood how to respond to the prompt, knew how to incorporate other writing into her own writing, and was able to write using

standard English conventions. That is, most of his comments seemed to recognize Dona as an emerging college writer.

Dona's approach to the essay and her addressing his expectations explicitly suggested that at this point she recognized Dr. Jackson as the authority and was willing to comply with his suggestions for writing; however, this granting of legitimacy shifted slightly as is evidenced in the next section.

### Perspective #3 - Writing as a Member of the College Community

For Essay #1, Dona had made changes based on what Dr. Jackson had said in class in reference to another student essay (see Chapter 3), thus granting him a certain level of authority from the beginning. After the class session when several sample essays were read and discussed, Dona told me that she returned to her own essay and rewrote it. She said she pulled in additional resources, the textbook, the class discussion, and read aloud samples, and used them as mentor texts from which to fashion her own writing. And, as he had discussed in class the importance of using descriptive details in this first essay, she said, "I added more details...description. I made sure I had description in mine." She said she was focused on giving Dr. Jackson "what he wanted" and she tried "to follow his instructions carefully." Initially, she clearly saw him as a resource for writing instruction, and while she drew on valuable resources for her work, what is interesting is the decline throughout the quarter of her acceptance of his authority as an evaluator of college writing.

After Essays #1 and #2 were returned with grades and comments, she said, “So I’ll go back and read his comments and be more aware of what he’s trying to tell me to do,” and she would make adjustments to the next essay, recognizing Dr. Jackson’s role. However, with Essay #4, she began to question his grading. She believed that she deserved a better grade on this essay (A) than the one assigned (B+) and felt that sometimes Dr. Jackson “didn’t understand what she was trying to say.” This may have been evidence of Dona’s feeling more comfortable as a kind of authority in this community herself. In the beginning of the quarter, when she was standing somewhat outside the community looking in, she had articulated some concerns about her ability to perform competently. Now that she had spent seven weeks inside this classroom, she began to question Dr. Jackson and his evaluation of her writing.

D: Sometimes...like the last one he said I needed more organization and after I read through it again, I was like, ok he’s right about that. But there’s some where he’s like...cuz he put that I didn’t incorporate Jon Kraukaur...do you know what the essay was about?

R: Yeah.

D: That I didn’t incorporate Jon Kraukaur’s experiences a lot but in the prompt he said Jon K’s experience or Chris McCandless. So I said why you are going to take points off when you said I had a choice?

R: Did you talk to him?



D: No.

R: Is it worth talking to him about?

D: I don't know. It was point 4 percent of a point. Point 4.

It is interesting to note that in the next comment (below) Dona referred to the instructor's not understanding what "we're trying to say in *our* essays" rather than what "I'm trying to say, in *mine*" perhaps evidence of her sense of belonging to a collective group even as she expressed her frustration. And as a member of this group, she could criticize his comments on her essay based on what he had said in the classroom:

And yeah, it's because his feedback is good, but sometimes like, I think he's wrong. (*laughter*) There's times when like he's right, but like he doesn't understand what we're trying to say in our essays and we're like no that's correct, you don't understand. Do you know what I mean?

In a very real sense, Dona was in a one sided negotiation with Dr. Jackson, one sided because she did not talk to him one-on-one in his office as apparently she wasn't sure if it was worth it. But with her laughter and her simulated conversation with Dr. Jackson, she at least presented herself to me as a budding equal to Dr. Jackson, in contrast to Kevin and Becky who tended to view Dr. Jackson as the one with ultimate authority and themselves without any.

### **Key Findings**

According to the University, Dona had already been granted a certain measure of legitimacy by her entrance exam. Her entrance to this new community was related to three key findings.

- Dona’s participation was of a different kind and she did not fully participate in key practices and routines of Freshman Composition 1.
- Dona appeared to bring to this class a sense of the expectations of college writing and this served to foster her legitimacy as a member of this community.
- With each essay, Dona was able to maintain an alignment with what looked like college level writing.

I was fortunate to speak with Dona at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. She approached the table where I was sitting near a coffee shop on campus, and still radiated with the confidence of a happy college student. Her smile was broad and her “Hi Miss Lisa” greeting was followed by a hug. Gone were the tears or worries about academic performance. She sat down and we chatted about her winter and spring quarters. In her Freshman Composition 1 class, her final essay grades were three Bs and two As. She finished the class with a B+. She said she had learned in Freshman Composition 2 how to “add to her essays ideas that were relevant” while maintaining particular organizational structures. She felt confident in her ability to produce college level writing and had

successfully written a twelve page paper for a sociology class during winter quarter. She was looking forward to her summer school class of Freshman Composition 3. It appeared that Dona felt prepared to meet the writing expectations of the rest of her college education.

Dona came to Freshman Composition 1 with a measure of legitimacy already granted by the University. She did not appear to feel the need to participate in all the practices and routines. Not only had she already gained access to the community via her entrance exam, but her potential membership was further confirmed by Dr. Jackson's grades and written comments on her essays. She was moving closer and closer to being a legitimate member of this community, and in many ways was already acting like one. She said she would not go see the instructor "at least not until I see myself dropping quickly," a circumstance which did not come about as evidenced by her grades. Her final comment about her grade on Essay #4 was, "I don't care if I get an A (*in the class*). I just want the A on this essay." And then she laughed. It appeared that Dona was used to doing well and had a hard time accepting less than what she thought she deserved. I suggest that Dona, based on her background, had learned to make do on her own and did not feel the need to fully participate in all the routines to gain access to this community.

Kevin, Becky, and Dona, although by different avenues, had all appeared to have gained access to the college writing community. They participated differently and learned how to produce college level writing. The next focal student, Mark, had a different story.

Initially, he had been considered ready for the college writing community as evidenced by his entrance exam score. However, Mark took a different approach to participation and the challenges inherent in Freshman Composition 1, complicating his journey which appeared less successful than that of the other three focal students. His story is covered in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Story of Mark**

Mark came to Freshman Composition unsure of himself as a writer. His engagement in the expected routines and practices of the class was minimal and along with the subtle withdrawing of legitimacy of his potential membership by Dr. Jackson, Mark's ability to join this community became limited.

#### **Entering a New Community**

From the back row, I watched Mark come into the room on the first day of Freshman Composition 1. Juggling skateboard, laptop, water bottle and backpack, he found his way to the back row, against the back wall. He settled in, leaned his skateboard against the cement wall and immediately opened his laptop. His crew cut hair, white t-shirt, baggy shorts and flip flop shoes belied the fact that he was in a college classroom, as he could have been dressed for a day at a park. Mark was beginning his journey into college writing. I settled in to watch his experience as he navigated his way through this new community.

#### **Background**

Mark's family was Korean and, while his parents were born in Korea, he had been born in Southern California. He had one sister who was in her third year at a major university as a double major and on track to graduate in three years as opposed to the

usual four. From the beginning of our conversation about his schooling, Mark expressed the feeling that he wasn't confident in his own abilities, describing himself as a being "terrible" in English, even though in 7th grade, he said with laughter, "I got to Honors English. I don't know how."

Mark's parents did not go to college and did not speak any English. He did not speak much about his parents other than to say their situation was sad when they got married and moved to America. Aside from the following comments, he never mentioned them again in any of our conversations.

R: Are your parents college educated?

M: No...uh...I don't think they even went to high school.

R: Really?

M: Yeah...cuz, they (un) had a hard (un). It's sad.

R: Did they move here from Korea or were they born here too?

M: They're from Korea. They were born in Korea.

R: [ok]

M: They came here. They got married. Yeah. So the first to go to college would be my sister and I.

Mark began to learn English in elementary school although his home language was Korean. He felt he struggled in school but was able to get by on his sister's

reputation, enabling him to enroll in a magnet high school that focused on enriched studies and mathematics.

R: Did you go there (*the magnet high school*) since sixth grade?

M: Yeah.

R: So you went all the way through there? Did your sister go there too?

M: My sister went first and that's how I went because to get into that school you need magnet points and if you have a sibling...then it's easier to get into...

R: [gives you points?]

M: Yeah...so I got in because of my sister.

At one point in our conversation, he elaborated on his high school experiences as he struggled in his Honors English class and switched to regular English partway through the year.

M: ... it was a little too hard for me so I chose not to take honors and I went to regular English...then from what I remember it became more fun and easier for me through high school.

R: mmmhmmm...because why?

M: Because I got to understand what everything was...like before...before I had no idea what the thesis was...I had no idea how to write paragraphs for essays...

R: mmmhmmm.

M: I had no idea what body one body two conclusions were and throughout my years I...it gets better...they tell me to write more briefly...and like how to make an essay better...add more adjectives...add more verbs...you know.

From the beginning of his college experience, Mark was under pressure to be successful in college, follow in the footsteps of his sister, and go beyond the schooling of his parents. Similar to Kevin, Mark already had an avenue of access available to him through his sister's experience, which may have provided insight for Mark as to the expectations and practices of a college student. However, unlike Kevin, Mark did not appear to make use of this knowledge as his participation in Freshman Composition 1 was marginal and he did not appear to be ready to engage with his college experience.

As Mark entered the college writing classroom, he characterized himself as a struggling writer. As evidenced by our final conversation and his declining performance on writing tasks throughout the quarter, not much seemed to happen over the 10 weeks of class to change his self-perception.

#### Repertoires/Routines/Participation

The following detailed account of Mark's behaviors in Freshman Composition 1 contains specifics not found for the other focal students as I sat in the back of the room next to Mark all quarter, a position that allowed me to closely observe him during each



class session. The other focal students sat in other desks toward the front of the room and my observations of them were therefore from a greater distance.

As indicated in Chapter 3, on the first day of the quarter, Dr. Jackson began class by going over the syllabus, expectations, and required texts. The entire class was silent. They did not ask questions or even consult with each other. All faced forward and some took notes in a three ring binder. Similar to those around him, Mark did not raise his hand, ask any questions, or respond orally to the instructor. Instead, he had his laptop open as well as his phone. He focused his attention alternately between the instructor, his laptop screen, and his cell phone key pad.

For the first two weeks of class, not much changed in Mark's behavior. Rarely did he converse with anyone other than to greet me and chat with the student next to him. He came to class dressed in flip flops, loose fitting shorts and a t-shirt as did others in the class, usually just in time for the beginning of the class. He always sat in the back row, next to me. Greeting me politely each time, he would settle in, lean his skateboard against the back wall, pull out his laptop and cell phone, and arrange them on the inadequately sized desktop. Mark's behaviors and use of technology were not much different than most students in this class. He looked and acted like the other college freshmen in this course.

During the eighth class session (the beginning of week three), Mark seemed antsy in his back row seat. He bounced his leg continuously and his book was open, but his

head slowly dropped forward and his eyes were closed. Dr. Jackson put students into groups by rows and asked them to discuss particular sections of the reading that had been assigned the previous night. Mark partnered with the student in front of him and they discussed their assigned section. After a few minutes of a conversational hum, Dr. Jackson quieted the class and, starting with the group closest to the front of the room, had each pair share what they had discussed. Two groups prior to getting to Mark and his partner, Mark got up, walked to the front and asked permission to leave the room. While he was gone, his partner was left to share with the class what he and Mark had discussed about the assigned reading. In retrospect, Mark's leaving appeared to be an avoidance of interaction with the class or instructor. In a future class session, when given the option to either work in a group or work alone, Mark chose to work alone.

At the end of the third week, Dr. Jackson returned the first graded essay. Mark flashed me the page on which the grade had been written and circled. He smiled briefly, almost apologetically, and said, "Got a C." He did not hand the essay to me but, instead, frowning his eyebrows together in frustration, appeared to be trying to make sense of the written comments. Included in these comments, as well as in the comments on Essay #4, was an invitation to visit Dr. Jackson in his office to go over some of the errors. Mark did not go to Dr. Jackson's office hours all quarter.

After a brief discussion about Essay #2, a profile of an intriguing person, group of people, place, or community activity, Dr. Jackson assigned each row of students specific

paragraphs from one of three model narrative essays in their textbook. He chose paragraphs from “I’m Not Leaving Until I Eat This Thing,” by John T. Edge, “Show Dog,” by Susan Orlean, and “The Last Stop” by Brian Cable. Students were to look for two characteristics of narrative writing. First, they were to look for temporal transitions, words such as first, next, and finally, that clarified for the reader the chronological order of the event being described. The second characteristic students were to identify were action verbs. Dr. Jackson gave them the option of either pairing up or working alone. Mark chose the latter. He quickly read the assigned section, shut his book, took a drink of water, shuffled through his backpack and, finally, opened his laptop. He did not discuss the essay, or the characteristics Dr. Jackson had asked students to look for in the text, with anyone.

At the end of the fifth week of school, the instructor arrived at 2:08. Mark was already seated in the back row, laptop open. As soon as Dr. Jackson addressed the class, he announced a quiz. “Oh shit” was Mark’s quiet yet immediate response. The instructor said there were two parts to the quiz and that they could use their books. During the thirteen minutes the instructor gave them to complete the quiz, Mark flipped through his text and wrote rapidly on notebook paper. He turned the paper in with the rest of the class.

During the next class, Dr. Jackson collected and then redistributed Essay #2 drafts, each student getting one other than their own. They were to read their peer’s paper

and write responses on an “Essay One Peer Review” evaluation sheet. ” There were eight questions on the sheet. Three of them asked for a response in reference to whether or not the essay was a well-told story that included appropriate and sufficient narrative details. Three questions asked whether or not appropriate and vivid description was used, and the final two questions asked if the writer had reflected on and discussed the significance of the described event. Nine and one half minutes later, after appearing to read the four-page essay and write remarks on the response paper, Mark put his response paper and his classmate’s essay aside and opened his laptop.

At the end of the fifth week, students were put into groups again. As Mark sat in his group, he texted on his phone and did not join in the conversation. After sitting in his group for less than four minutes, Mark returned to his seat and opened his laptop. A few minutes later, his phone went off but he ignored it and continued to scroll down his computer screen.

On the day Essay #2 was returned, Dr. Jackson went over his proofreading marks, but Mark did not appear to be paying attention and instead was typing on his laptop. Unobtrusively glancing at his paper, I saw that he had received another “C.” Seven and a half minutes later, Mark continued to type, even though Dr. Jackson was still lecturing. At one point, Mark took a break from typing to discuss his plans for Friday with the student sitting next to him. Twenty minutes into class, he was texting on his phone, typing on his laptop, and then his phone rang, but he didn’t answer it. At one point, Mark

turned to his neighbor and they discussed the difference between paraphrasing and summary, which was the only comment he made in reference to what was being covered by Dr. Jackson at the time. Thirty-four minutes into the class, Mark turned his computer around so his neighbor could see it, they had a whispered discussion regarding the picture displayed, and then he began to text on his phone. Thirty-eight minutes into the 50-minute class, Mark was still typing on his laptop.

On Monday of the seventh week, Mark arrived late, sat down, opened his computer and began to type. The instructor returned graded Essay #2. Mark did not look at it, but instead stuffed it into his backpack and continued to type for the next 30 minutes. The instructor talked about oral presentations that were to be ready for the next class session. Each student was assigned a particular chapter of the novel *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. The students were to be prepared to summarize the chapter, read a section that they felt to be meaningful, and discuss why they chose that particular passage.

On the day that had been designated as Mark's day to present, he was absent. As a result, Dr. Jackson covered the summary and discussion of Mark's section instead. The following class, Mark returned, with his laptop. While other students shared their oral presentations, Mark typed. Near the end of class, he began to text on his phone. Over the next several days during student presentations, Mark either typed or played games on his phone. Even when the student next to him was presenting, Mark continued to focus on his computer screen.

November 21, 23 and 28, Mark was absent. I talked with Dr. Jackson, and he informed me that the student sitting next to Mark in the back row had dropped the class, but, as of yet, the instructor had not seen a drop slip for Mark. On November 30, Mark limped into class. He explained to me that he had injured himself during a dance competition and could barely walk, which was why he had missed the last three classes. Fifteen minutes into class, he was typing on his laptop and continued to do so until the end of the session. On the last day of class, Mark arrived and sat in his customary seat and, five minutes into class, opened his laptop and typed for the remainder of the session.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), becoming a member of a new community required active participation, yet it appeared that Mark was not engaged in such an enterprise. In the contemporary fashion, as opposed to traditional, Mark used his laptop and cell phone in the class every day. While these were tools of the modern classroom, their implied purpose in class is to supplement classroom instruction, and therefore the use of these tools was accepted as a common repertoire. Mark's use of these tools, however, was not always related to classroom instruction or activities and, therefore, even though he appeared to be participating appropriately, he was not. He sat in the same seat throughout the quarter, but his conversation was limited to the student immediately to his left and tended to consist of discussions about activities outside the classroom. When in groups or with a partner, his interaction was minimal. Even though group work was an expectation of the class as stated by Dr. Jackson, this was a routine in which Mark

did not fully participate. While Mark was only late one day, he was absent for four days out of the quarter, missing more than 10% of class sessions. As I did not keep track of other specific students' attendance, I cannot say whether this was typical behavior of these college freshmen or not. As mentioned in Chapter 3, other students' behaviors as well varied between full participation to limited participation. However, while most students engaged in "school-like" behaviors, some students' appropriate participation, similar to Mark's, appeared to be limited. Mark's absences suggested a low level of engagement in the class, which seemed to be in line with his other classroom behaviors. Not only mentally, but physically, Mark placed himself outside the center of this class. Within the confines of this classroom, Mark appeared to be no more a member at the end of the quarter than he was at the beginning.

#### Expectations and Challenges

October 10th was the date of our first interview. We convened upstairs from the classroom where we sat on the floor of the hallway. Mark sat on his skateboard, rolling back and forth the entire time. It appeared that he was not ready to take this conversation seriously and, in addition, he seemed nervous, evidenced by his shy smile and occasional stutter as we talked about his experience as a freshman.

When I asked him about what he expected from the class and what he thought the challenges would be, he had trouble articulating an answer. In his defense, most likely

these were issues he had never taken the time to think about, much less articulate to anyone.

R: So what do you think are going to be some of the challenges as far as transition from high school to college in writing?

M: In writing?...Ummm

R: Yeah. Specifically in the area of writing.

M: Ummm...let's see.

R: And this is hard as you've only been here two and a half weeks...so...

M: A challenge is going to be writing long page essays...cuz in high school the most pages I wrote was two pages max...

R: Oh really?

M: And then when I heard our first essay was three pages...I was like...oh... I was kinda like...ohhh...that's kinda a lot. I heard that in this type of English class...in my history class, I have to write five pages so if my writing gets better...if I have to make up more words to make the pages fill in...

Similar to all the focal students, the expected length of assigned essays was a concern. In this short conversation, Mark's only articulated expectation of college writing had to do with paper length. While he identified the challenge, he also articulated a way around it. In the instructor's explanation for this first paper, he did ask for at least three



pages of writing, While Mark was negotiating a response to the instructor's expectations, "making up words," it was not a response that would be acceptable in the community of college writers. It was as if, rather than work harder to meet the challenge, he was looking for a way to circumvent it. As Mark had mentioned earlier, when he had struggled in Honors English, he decided not to pursue the Honors Track the following year. When finding himself in a difficult situation, it may have been a pattern of his to seek an easier path rather than struggle in the current one. This path did not fit with Dr. Jackson's course description, which warned the students by saying the requirements of this class may be "a more rigorous and sophisticated standard...than what has been required of you in the past." Dr. Jackson did not promote the idea of there being an easy way around hard work.

When we talked about the upcoming essay, profiling a person, place or event, he expressed concern trying to understand this new genre.

R: What about the content? Think that is going to be a challenge...like he just talked about profiling.

M: Yeah...yeah...profiling.

R: Does that seem like a daunting task or...

M: Well it's like it's different. Like the first one was easier cuz it's just like description...blah...blah...like...all it talked about was something that happened in your life but now it's like a whole different (un) now we talk

about profiling people...places...events... like theories that happened in your life.

Mark appeared confused about the expectations for this type of essay. He sounded comfortable with the narrative genre as he dismissively said it was “just description” and had to do with an event in one’s life. But now Dr. Jackson was introducing another genre, one with which Mark may not have been familiar. When introducing Essay #2, Dr. Jackson had said, “This one is going to be a little bit more difficult than Essay #1...you are going to be explaining something ...you need to bring yourself into it.” When Mark described profiling as “theories that happened in your life,” he appeared confused about the expectations of the content of this essay as he tried to mesh Dr. Jackson’s comments about explanation as well as bringing one’s self into the essay. This confusion may have contributed to Mark’s marginal participation as he was already struggling to understand the expectations of this community.

When I asked him what he thought a successful college writer should be able to do, he had trouble articulating his definition. “That’s a hard question...” was his initial response. After thinking, he ultimately defined a successful writer as “a person that can always find all those five things...those five factors that make a perfect essay, to get an A...which is you always have that good...that good first paragraph, then you have that rising action, climax, falling action and then the resolution.” The “five things” were

concepts that had been covered the first day of class. But, as indicated in Chapter 3, these five were actually reading comprehension, unity, development, coherence, grammar and usage. Even though it appeared that Mark was listening in class, he was confusing the specific elements of a narrative with the more general requirements for a well-written essay. This conversation took place at the beginning of the third week of school. We can't know if narrative was a structure that he remembered from high school such that it all sounded familiar already. But it is likely that Mark had never thought of what a college writer should be able to do, or that he was not engaged in class enough to recognize that college level writing required more than just the ability to write a story, a genre that he had earlier called "easier, cuz it's just like description." So in a sense, Mark is handicapped in terms of entering a community for which he has a limited understanding.

When questioned as to how he saw *himself* as a college writer, he admitted to being "nervous. "

R: Do you see yourself as pretty confident or...

M: I want to say I'm confident, but I'm nervous...like...I know... I know there's a lot of better writers than me. I'm not...I'm not a very good writer...but...ummm...I'm not THAT confident...

R: Ok

M: I'm supposed to be but...

R: Why do you say that?

M: cuz...

R: [that's interesting]

M: Cuz when confident, then know you can do well and you have to have (un), you know...to do well

Initially, Mark's concerns about Freshman Composition 1 were minimal, yet because this experience was a new one for him, it was not unexpected that his ability to voice his concerns and expectations was limited. Throughout the quarter his participation remained peripheral and his writing performance declined, suggesting that his perspectives on what constituted the actual challenges offered in this class misled him and compromised his freshman composition experience.

### **Mark's writing**

Below are Mark's Essays #1, #2, and #4 (Mark did not share Essay #3 with me) and a discussion of the three different perspectives.

Essay #1

Professor [redacted]

10/07/2011

Essay 1-Final Draft

How about a title that reflects your topic?

I remember a cool and peaceful night filled with happiness and joy in a city called Seoul, located in South Korea. I was young and careless, about nine years old at the time. I was on a family trip to Korea with my mom and sister to visit my aunt and uncle, who I haven't seen in over six years. I wasn't as close to my relatives in Korea because this was my ^{only} third time seeing them since I was born. Throughout the first week, my sister had girl time with my mom and aunt, cooking dinner, while my uncle and I were to have a boy's night out in the city eating silkworms and fried fish in the market stands.

Nice start

My ^{le} Uncle had a unique ^{characteristic} feature because he was always bald and wore grey robes around the city. ^{stuff} But I never understood why I was always curious about why he never had hair and wore the same clothes over and over again. I asked him, "Uncle, do you not have clothes? Why is your head always so shiny?!" He ^{as} replied with a small laugh and said, "I am a Buddhist monk. At a young age my mother ^{and} father passed away because of cancer and the only place that would accept me was the temple." Even my own mom ^{had +} never told me about this ^{until now} ^{logic} because ^{always} she said, "you're too young, you wouldn't understand." Thinking about death ^{due to} illnesses started to scare me because, I was afraid that I might catch ^{one of them (as)} it someday.

The next morning I ^{wake} woke up from a loud vomiting noise coming from the bathroom. I thought my uncle was just sick from last night's buggy meal; however, it didn't look normal. He

2  
sounded? (we)  
looked as if he was dying! I was in shock so I ran to my aunt's room where my mom and sister were asleep and woke them up ^{we} considerably. As soon as my uncle stopped vomiting, he fainted in the bathroom. We called an ambulance as soon as possible and he was rushed to the nearest hospital.

When my family and I arrived to the hospital that morning, the doctor told us that he was diagnosed with gall bladder. ^{infection} It isn't a ^{well known} famous organ ^W to be known by people, so they often ignore its importance. However, the sickness that my uncle had wasn't something to be ignored. A form of bacteria called ^{gall stones} gall stones were erupting in his bladder and the only way to ^{remove them (exact)} cure gall bladders were to ^{was (W)} go into surgery, and ^W remove it ^{later that day (trans)} by surgeons to cure it. I saw my uncle with his eyes closed and an oxygen mask on his face because he was ready for operation. My family was in shock because it was so unexpected. How can a man be so healthy one night and become a zombie the next morning? In fact, I ~~was~~ ^{bursting} in tears because I thought gall bladder was a form of cancer that would have killed him sooner or later.

*Used details*  
After hours of surgery, he was ^{lying (W)} lying in his hospital bed with a tube going down his throat and white tapes wrapped around his veiny forearms. I was curious about what the tubes were for, so I asked my uncle how ^{they} it works. My uncle replied, "Everything I eat, I have to blend it into small pieces that can pass through the tube, whether it's solid or liquid." I was totally fascinated by how things worked that way. A young, careless, and curious little boy I was. Throughout the week, my uncle looked like he was getting thinner by day. It seemed like he never had an appetite. Whenever the nurse or my mom brought in food, he would just set it on the bed without

touching it and fed it to me instead. I was also a little overweight back then so I was ready for food at any moment!

I had ^{two (mom)} more weeks of vacation left in Korea. When I was ^{My plans about} thinking about all the good food I would get to eat, travel around the brightest city, and visit ^{is} amazing theme parks, ^{it just} ~~happened to~~ ^{ed} crash down for my whole family because of my uncle's sickness. ^{However during} Within those 2 weeks, I tried to get to know my uncle a little more than before. He would always tell me to sit down on the bed with him and tell me his stories about what monks used to do for a living. Pray, eat only what's given on the table, pray, sleep, and pray again. ^{During} Within those hours of story time, ^{we interrupted} ~~it was~~ another day of surgery. He didn't go through one, but many operations to cure his gall bladder. Every time he was carried away from the room in his uncomfortable looking hospital bed, he would have that sad grin on his face. It just looked like he didn't want to leave the room or be separated from me. I formed such a close bond with him that I would never even forget how his face looked like before every operation.

mixed

exact

^{During} Within the last week of my stay in Korea, my uncle was still in the hospital. I made a visit every day with my mom and sister ^{bring} him cards and hugs to him so that he ^{can} feel better. My aunt was working daily to help my uncle pay for the operations.

What does your experience suggest about and intimacy between family members? (Clev)

On the last day of my stay in Korea, ^{le} We visited him one last time to make sure he was getting better. I wanted to stay longer but our flight was nearby. I gave him a hug and kiss on his shiny forehead. To this day, I look back at the time of someone I wasn't close to who became an important part of my life. To this day, he is healthy and alive.

This is a well chosen incident and you include useful details in this draft. It is a promising essay. But there is room for more reflection on its significance. In addition, the frequency of grammar & usage errors is a distraction to the reader.

Be sure to bring a draft of Essay Two by my office next week so that we can talk about these in more detail. Let's work on needing them out this quarter.





Essay #2

Professor [redacted]

October 24, 2011

Changing Our Society into a Brighter Future

It felt like I was in Antarctica that morning, because the early morning breeze was blowing? ^{wind?} flowing as if it was a hurricane. Waking up at five in the morning to see a brighter future was a ^{fact} ^{job} I had to complete without getting paid. A special group of children and young teenagers have the opportunity to participate in an event called The Griffith Park Cleanup, hosted by The Pacific American Volunteer Association. ^{was founded (w)} It is a private organization that is made by Korean Americans who love the act and fellowship of ^{preserving?} pursuing the environment. Most people however call it "PAVA" for short. It's an exciting community service program ^{what aing} to preserve the environment and encourage positive relationships with other local communities. Also, people ^{by joining it, (w)} can learn to expand volunteerism and teach the youth to be the next generation of leaders that are committed to make positive improvements in the society.

I remember when my best friend, Minki, and I attended the Griffith Park Clean up, because our parents forced us to do community service. ^{for (w)} ~~It was one of the first events when~~ PAVA took place in Griffith Park, located in the city of Los Angeles. Griffith Park isn't just a park where you see sandboxes, playgrounds, and basketball courts. It's a mountain that ^{features} has many attractions such as, horseback riding, hiking, golfing, picnicking, bike riding up the mountain, and on the apex, there's an observatory with a huge telescope where people can see stars and planets up close.

Helpful  
education  
of  
the city

My parents dropped off Minki and me ^{by} towards the booth of PAVA, where we had to sign up our names, the school we attended, and the year of birth. They gave us a free T-shirt ^{display} of PAVA to wear on duty when we start the community service activity. The upperclassmen and previous PAVA members made over two hundred fifty kids get in a line ^{to} to receive gardening tools such as shovels, cultivators, hoes, garden forks, rakes, latex gloves, and trash bags. Our project and goal for this community service event was to clean up all the trash that was seen around the area of Griffith Park.

As the event started, Minki and I were walking towards the forest area of Griffith Park. We spotted ^{we} tons of beer cans, blunt wrappers, and used condoms on the ^{ground (we)} floor. I had a feeling that typical teenagers were up here the night before, drinking, smoking, and having sexual activities outdoors. We played a game of rock, paper, scissors, because neither of us wanted to pick ^{them} it up. However, the result was a loss for me. Thank PAVA I had rubber gloves on...

We kept on walking towards a trail that led to a dead end. As we walked, ^{had been (+)} tons of waste was just sitting next to the trees and branches that ~~were~~ broken off on purpose with axes. Most shockingly, we saw dead squirrels that ^{were} killed on purpose! It wasn't just a squirrel who fell off a tree and got squashed, it was an animal crime scene that looked extremely ^{gore} with foot prints on top of the skin. I picked up every part of anything I saw and said, "Rest in Peace" and put it in the trash bag. Environmental awareness ^{is} and conservations ^{are} is an urgent task ^s that local communities need to solve. By working together on projects, we can help the earth and prevent any kinds of disasters, even animal cruelty.

As the day went by, the sun was getting brighter and PAVA called all the members back to the booth area. There were tables set around with 100% concentrated orange juices and

Turkey sandwiches from subway for free. PAVA members all got together and mingled with one another from local communities and schools. In ^wlife, the most valuable way of living is by socializing, bonding, and sharing your achievements with one another. PAVA will help and socialize with anybody of any race, gender, sex, and age who ^{is (as)} willing to serve and help the environment safe and aid people.

What reasons did some of the people give for participating? (dew)

As the day hit about 12 o'clock, brunch was over. Everyone headed back into the mountain area and started to finish up the cleanup. This time, digging and raking ^{as} heavily involved, because they took us to a trail where all the garbage was stuffed inside the soil. Although it was hard, everybody ^{red} tends to have ^{rather} more fun than take it as "hard work" because, most people will never get the chance to be with a group of random people, or friends and work together as a team to do something virtuous.

Good but worth a bit more noticeable detail. (dew)

^{By} ~~Throughout~~ the end of the day, it was about four in the afternoon and everybody gathered back to the booth area. As a team, PAVA collected over 300 trash bags of rubbish. All the members were told to stand in a line and receive a certificate and an honor award for accomplishing the goal.

Not sure what you mean here.

Some people have fun to do work and get paid and some don't. I realized how important and fun an outdoor activity can be without even getting paid. I would still do it even if it wasn't for the hours of community service. It's ^{is valuable because it (exact)} about the experience and achievements you gain as a young teenager to be remembered as in the future.

What words did they leave you with? (dew)

The Griffith Park cleanup is just one of the events, but I believe that it is the biggest one I've participated in. There's also the Los Angeles River Cleanup, and feeding the homeless during Christmas week.

About sixty percent of Americans are involved in volunteering services for various reasons, such as to fulfill volunteering requirements for schools and jobs. Others just participate for the satisfaction of it, which is even better! I wanted to make a difference and PAVA inspired me to do it. Not only did PAVA change my life, my acquaintances became friends, and this project rooted the volunteering spirits we teenagers never had. As the organization of community service gets bigger, the people in the future will develop a good mental and personal character, experiencing many means to become involved in today's society.

Important points, Are you more likely to volunteer in the future?

This is a well chosen topic and you focus it with a clear sense of its importance & value. And the information you include is all appropriate. There is room for you to depict the interaction and camaraderie of the group in more detail, and room for more dialogue -- see my suggestions.

There is also a need for more editing and proofreading, especially for word choice and verb tense.

Essay #3

English 1A

November 22, 2011

Into the Wild: Death and Bereavement

There are people in this world who go out looking for an adventure. There are people who have the mentality to think that they will never die. The natures and values of Chris McCandlee's ordeal in facing challenges near death experience consist of his journeys throughout the wilderness in Alaska. Chris is a type of guy who tends to be somewhat shy, quiet, and shows no emotions when he is around new people. He likes excitement and adrenalin which makes his personality into an animal out in the wild. At the age of twenty two, Chris wanted to clinch a thirst for adventure; his life was about taking risks, experiencing nature and discovering the feeling of ultimate freedom. He was not seeking evenness in the wilderness of Alaska. Chris wanted to experience life to the fullest with no regrets.

Chris was inadequately in nature, avoidant with society in the pleasures of civilization. Preferring only to survive with no tools, he challenges himself. The only thing he had going into the wilderness was a ten pound bag of rice, and a rifle that wasn't strong enough to even kill a bear, and a map that showed Denali Park road. Chris shows how easy it is for a person to live without money. Although money makes the world go around and make people happy, he asserted that he did not need money because, it is inherently evil and made people greedy. Before his voyage to Alaska, Chris donated all of his money to a famine relief fund and burned the rest of his cash in his wallet. As Chris ventures into the Alaskan wilderness, all of the obstacles and challenges he faced are related to nature. Chris had to stride across frozen rivers, he is challenged

Vague & incoherent intro. Try starting with a specific example

we

* Skill incoherent development

by his own ignorance and inexperience's with the wilderness, and in the end he is trapped in a bus by nature. Chris has no experience whatsoever with the wilderness. A regular guy wanting to go on an adventure fills through many holes throughout his journeys. Throughout his adventures, he faces challenges by meeting strangers and sharing roads with them. In Los Angeles, he is barely able to venture into the city before he becomes too disgusted by the idea of rejoining society.

wc

real?

col

Chris wasn't desperate for money; the only way to continue on his challenging journey was for him to get a job. As he travels, he ends up in Bullhead city, where he gets employed at a Mc Donalds. He goes far enough as to opening his own savings account, and uses his real name for the first time to strangers and his social security number for the job. Chris never got to know his coworkers very well. When Chris quit the job because he didn't have a good hygiene, he tried to hide from his coworkers the fact that he was a homeless, camping outside of town living in a semi deserted mobile home. No matter what, even if people try to care about him by giving him clothes or food, his instincts tell him to deny it.

what does this have to do with your topic (dis)

Throughout Chris's life, he had natural talents in many things. He ^{became} would get very skilled at different sports, but would always refuse to follow specific instructions from other people and coaches. Chris never thought of a strategy. Even when Chris thought of going into the wilderness to survive, he had no strategy. Instead, he tries to over accomplish problems with brutal force, which often lead to frustration. Chris understands other people's lives by those who are left behind, such as talking to homeless people and prostitutes. Buying them food and giving them the comfort what any human being needs.

Really? (comp)

sew

Also not clear how this relates (dis)

Not only McCandless was an adventurer. Krauker and Chris were similar in some ways. They are both self-absorbed, passionate, and had a harsh childhood growing up with problems with male figures. Krauker loved challenges, as well as trying out new things. When he was young, he would be obsessed with climbing and fantasized about taking risky climbs that would be a life or death situation. "It is easy, when you are young, to believe that what you desire is no less than what you deserve, to assume that if you want something badly enough, it is your God-given right to have it." (Krauker, 155) At the age of twenty three, he plans to climb the Devils Thumb, in Alaska. As he starts his journey, he already faces Death and Bereavements because a snow storm breaks and he loses his sight, making him almost fall into the cracks. "I thought climbing the Devils Thumb would fix all that was wrong with my life. In the end, of course, it changed almost nothing." (Krauker, 155) When a couple days pass, and the weather got clear, he starts to challenge himself and climb again however the snow was too thick so he had no choice to go back down. When Krauker had set up a tent for three days having nothing to do but wait, he smokes marijuana which he was waiting to save for a victory cigar. Being clumsy, he throws the match into a bag of trash, where it starts to ignite and catch on to his tent. No matter how many days passed, Krakuer would not give up and try to climb that mountain with glory. The difficulties he faced were very stressful. Stressful enough to almost make him give up, however, failure was not an answer to him. Unlike Chris, he was more experienced with nature and knew what was right and wrong. Krauker had a mentality of a climber who knew when it was safe or not. Chris on the other hand, is an inexperienced adventurer who risks his life no matter what death means to him.

What  
topic  
are  
you  
addressing  
in  
this  
paragraph  
what  
does it  
have  
to  
do  
with  
you  
title?

McCandless's challenging journeys continue as he comes across an abandoned bus, which was stocked with necessities, so he decided to make that his comfy shelter for a while. His major challenges start to begin here. He quickly becomes starved and hungry, however, as the snow melts, the weather gets better, he copes his way of becoming a successful hunter and berry picker on a daily. McCandless decides to make the bus his own territory where no human life is able to be seen. After weeks of successful hunting, he kills a moose, thinking that he can then last the winter and spring on the meat, he realizes that he doesn't even know how to cure the raw meat so it doesn't indulge. Later on, he feels guilty of what he has done for wasting an animal.

Really? (comp)  
McCandless lacked knowledge and skills that could have helped him survive. He is himself for to blame of his arrogance and ignorance of his own death. Krauker finds an article about a dangerous mold that can grow on plants in wet climates, which happened to have killed McCandless. It makes his body feel very weak and hopeless. The berries he has been eating was useless because of the poison.

McCandless is one of the bravest guys I know, because he wasn't afraid of dying. In fact, he died off a wish that he had always wanted to conquer. Dying happily with no regret is one way I would like to leave the world. Before his death, his diary contained a goodbye messages that noted, "HAPPINESS ONLY REAL WHEN SHARED" (Krauker, 189) "HAVE HAD A HAPPY LIFE AND THANK THE LORD. GOODBYE AND MAY GOD BLESS ALL!" (Krauker, 199)

I believe that a person who has big dreams and goals, are able live the happiest life. No matter what stops you from doing something you love, doesn't mean you can't do it. When you



are faced with a difficult situation, you cope them by trying over and over again. Nothing is impossible in the world! A role model of mine that relates to a story like, Into the Wild, is a man named Bear Grylls. Grylls is an English adventurer, survivor, and writer who has his own television show about surviving the wilderness. He goes through tremendous adventures and discoveries by himself, with nothing but a knife. If it weren't for him and his disgusting eating habits of live animals and insects, I wouldn't know how to survive if I ever got lost in the wild. Grylls writes, "There is a purpose to these disgusting foods. If you're going to self-rescue, you've got to move. If you're going to move, you need energy, and if you need energy, you've got to find food." (*The Bear Grylls Survival Manual*, p1) Any survivor or people, who died coming across the nature of wilderness, are considered the bravest of this world. Grylls states that, "The people who survive in all the great stories of survival are people who leave their prejudices behind and do whatever it takes, no matter how unpleasant it is." (*The Bear Grylls Survival Manual*, p1).

Are you addressing the issue of failure here?

Interesting example.

But what topic is it developing?

(ok)

Into the wild?

Work Cited

1. Wieners, Brad. "The Bear Grylls Survival Manual | Men's Journal." *Men's Journal*.  
 Web. 21 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.mensjournal.com/bear-grylls>>.

) Double space



Pretty incoherent draft! Hopefully you'll be able to  
 take more time with the next essay and bring a  
 draft of it by my office so we can try to  
 figure out what your topic and plan are.



Perspective #1 – The University’s Rubric

Table 10

*Mark’s Essay Scores by Three Readers*

University entrance exam	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #4
<b>8</b>	1 st Rder - 4	1 st Rder – 3	1 st Rder - 2
	2 nd Rder - 3	2 nd Rder – 2	2 nd Rder - 2
	3 rd Rder - 3	3 rd Rder - 4	3 rd Rder - 2
	Avg – <b>3.3</b>	Avg– <b>3.0</b>	Avg – <b>2.0</b>

*Note:* Scoring based on a 6-point scale and scores in bold are the averaged scores of the readers; “Rder” stands for Reader; “Avg” stands for Average

As seen in Table 10, Mark’s entrance exam scored an 8, just high enough to permit him to enroll in Freshman Composition 1. As a researcher conducting a study in Freshman Composition 1, I was given access to his entrance exam essay. As indicated in Chapter 4, I was not given any input on the essay other than the final score. Measured against the rubric and according to my analysis, Mark’s essay was clear and focused, and attained a certain level of sophistication in word choice and sentence structure. Grammar errors were minimal and did not disrupt the flow of the piece. The introduction was

organized and the thesis statement clear. He referred back to the prompt and text used for the exam throughout his writing. It is clear why he was able to enroll in the freshman composition class. What is not clear is the decline of his writing in papers for Freshman Composition 1.

As indicated in Chapter 2, using SW University's rubric to evaluate Mark's essays in Freshman Composition 1, two additional readers and I independently scored each essay. I gave Essay #1 a score of 3 as, even though it competently followed a narrative structure, I found the prose to be characterized by "frequently imprecise word choice; little sentence variety; occasional major errors in grammar and usage." The grammar issues as a whole severely detracted from the essay's content. The second reader also gave it a 3 and added the comment that the essay "missed some of the assignment and had too many careless errors." The third reader also gave it a 3.

I scored Essay #2 as a 3 as it lacked elaboration with examples and had frequent usage errors. The second reader scored it with a 2, citing "serious errors – missing much of the assignment." The third reader gave it a score of 4, which means there were at least two points between the scores. As the third reader did not write any comments to support his score, I cannot account for this discrepancy. And finally, I scored Essay #4 with a 2, as did the second and third readers. This paper showed "serious weaknesses, ordinarily of several kinds. It frequently presents a simplistic, inappropriate, or incoherent response to the text, one that may suggest some significant misunderstanding of the text or the topic"

(SW University 6 Point Writing Rubric). The second reader’s comment was, “How did this student pass SW University’s entrance exam?”

Table 10 indicates the SW University’s exam results, along with the three outside readers’ scores on the assigned essays. Interesting to note is that any two scores by the outside readers for each of the Essays 1, 2, and 4, if added together, would not have been considered competent college level writing according to the entrance exam rubric for which passing was 8 on a 12 point scale.

Perspective #2– The Instructor’s

Table 11

*Dr. Jackson’s proofreading marks on Mark’s essays*

Proof reading mark/symbol	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #4
✓	8	3	0
☆	3	4	0
_____	6	15	9
_____ _____	0	0	0
□	0	2	1
~~~~~ (squiggly line under word(s))	4	7	12
Agr	2	2	0

Coh	0	1	7
Comp	0	0	3
CS	0	0	0
Dev	1	3	0
Dig	0	0	2
Exact	2	1	0
Frag	0	0	0
Lc	2	0	0
Logic	1	0	0
Mixed	1	1	1
Num	1	0	0
Ref	0	1	0
Shift	1	0	0
T	3	3	1
Trans	1	0	0
Usage	1	0	0
Voice	0	0	0
W	3	2	0
Wc	3	4	2
Ww	1	0	0

Essay #1 was a narrative, and the emphasis during class instruction was on writing a “well told story with vivid details and a clear significance.” Dr. Jackson’ first comment on Mark’s Essay #1 was in reference to the title. Although Dr. Jackson had not specifically asked for one, the inclusion of a title may have been an implied expectation in a college class. Mark received eight check marks, indicating good use of narrative details; three stars, indicating use of good descriptive details; and six underlined phrases and sentences, a reference to significance. Overall, Mark followed the structure of a “well told story,” using details and making references throughout to the significance of the event. Dr. Jackson’s initial comment was positive, writing that Mark chose an appropriate event and described it sufficiently, however needed to further explore the significance. This remark was interesting, as Dr. Jackson had underlined six different portions of text that he considered significant/reflective. During class, he had not specified *how many* reflective comments in reference to the significance of the event were required nor, more to the point, how the students would know when they had “reflected” enough. A reference to the need for more writing regarding the significance of Mark’s experience was included in the final comment on the essay, “...there is room for more reflection on its significance,” asking Mark to explore the implications of family illnesses and intimacies that surrounded Mark’s experience. Based on the combined check marks, stars and underlines, and Dr. Jackson’s initial comments, “...a well chosen incident” with “vivid details,” it appeared that the content of Mark’s essay adequately though not fully met the instructor’s expectations.

In spite of understanding the structure of a narrative, Mark struggled with grammar and usage. Prior to the due date of this first essay, Dr. Jackson had covered grammar issues during three successive classes related to the use of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and proper nouns as necessary for descriptive pieces. He also spent time specifically looking at fused sentences, comma splices, verb tenses, simple past versus past perfect, and dialogue punctuation. His final warning to the class about editing was “Too many mistakes can drag your grade down.” On Mark’s essay, there were multiple grammar errors (see Table 11). Dr. Jackson crossed out six different phrases throughout this essay and replaced it with another phrase directly above along with several other corrections, as in the following:

remove them (exact) was (w)

“...the only way to ~~cure gall bladders were to go into surgery, and remove it by surgeons to cure it.~~

He wrote a “w” over certain phrases to indicate wordiness, and crossed the wordy phrase out completely:

w

“...~~to be known by people~~...”

Other phrases, without writing a proofreading mark, he simply crossed out and rewrote above them, as in the following:

My plans about
“~~When I was thinking about all the good food...~~”

Dr. Jackson did not explicitly cover the issue of “wordiness” in class; however, he still held students accountable for writing clearly and succinctly. It is possible that he assumed students already must have known this from their experiences in high school. In addition to indicating wordiness on Mark’s paper, Dr. Jackson marked mistakes of capital letters, agreement, and lack of transitions, all issues that he *had* talked about in class.

As Dr. Jackson acknowledged in his final comments on Essay #1, Mark met the general criteria for a narrative, yet he still received the grade of a C. Apparently, to write a good story was not enough. The writing had to also demonstrate a competent grasp of Standard English which was exactly what Dr. Jackson had told the class prior to their turning in Essay #1. Also, within these final comments, he wrote “...the frequency of grammar and usage errors is a distraction to the reader” and then invited Mark to visit him during office hours: “be sure to bring a draft of Essay Two by my office next week so that we can talk about these in more detail.” When Dr. Jackson invited Mark to visit him in his office, in contrast to the casual “*drop by with a draft*” in Becky’s final written comments or the “*let’s keep working*” on Kevin’s, the use of “*be sure to bring a draft*” implied a different tone and was more a directive than an invitation.. After this comment, Dr. Jackson did write, “*let’s work...*” indicating his desire to work together with Mark to eliminate the frequent grammar and structural errors. It appeared that Dr. Jackson was offering an avenue for Mark to gain access to college writing, yet Mark shared with me that he did not go to Dr. Jackson’s office hours all quarter. Consequently, Mark did not have the experience of one on one conversation with Dr. Jackson that may have fostered

his potential as a member of this community and moved him closer to college level writing.

Essay #2 was to be a profile. During class, Dr. Jackson defined this as “reporting detailed information, having a coherent organizational plan, deciding on the role of the writer, and choosing the perspective/dominant impression/significance of the piece.” He spent six class sessions talking about these expectations and he had them read examples from the textbook for homework and then in class, they reviewed the examples to identify the features of a profile. He listed specifics on the board (see Chapter 3) and again, emphasized the dominant impressions, or significance, as an important concept to convey to the reader. His final comment on the day before the essay was due reminded students of the need to proofread and edit the piece.

Mark’s Essay #2 only received three checks (good narrative details) as opposed to Essay #1’s eight. However, Mark received three stars (descriptive details) and ten underlines (evidence of significance/reflection). Aside from grammar and usage errors, Mark seemed to be meeting the criteria for the profile until the third page where Dr. Jackson wrote three comments calling for more development of the text: *What reasons did some of the people give for participating? (dev)*; *Good but worth a bit more narrative detail. (dev)*; *What words did they leave you with? (dev)*. On Essay #1, Dr. Jackson had asked for more attention to the significance of the event as well as for editing. On Essay #2, he was asking for more detail, dialogue, and development of ideas. All of these suggestions appeared to be attempting to push Mark to think more like a writer, to dig

deeper into the essays' topics. The editing and proofreading were necessary as well, but this call for focus on the content suggested Dr. Jackson's expectation that college level writing included college level thinking. The grade on Essay #2 was a C.

In addition, Mark continued to struggle with grammar in Essay #2. Rather than writing proofreading abbreviations, Dr. Jackson corrected several mistakes of word choice by simply writing in the corrections. In this first paragraph, four errors of inappropriate word choice were marked, along with issues of coherence and verb tense. Several corrections were made that simply changed what Mark had written, without leaving a proofreading mark, which may have been an indication of frustration on the part of the instructor as these were the same issues that he had marked on the first essay. Following paragraphs are also marked up with comments, proofreading marks, and corrections along with some positive check marks and underlined sections.

Changing Our Society into a Brighter Future

wc
It felt like I was in Antarctica that morning, because the early morning breeze was ^{wind?} blowing? flowing as if it was a hurricane. Waking up at five in the morning to see a brighter future was a ^{task} job I had to complete without getting paid. A special group of children and young teenagers have the opportunity to participate in an event called The Griffith Park Cleanup, hosted by The Pacific American Volunteer Association. It is a private organization that is made by Korean Americans who love the act and fellowship of ^{preserving?} pursuing the environment. Most people however call it "PAVA" for short. It's an exciting community service program to ^{what aim?} preserve the environment and encourage positive relationships with other local communities. Also, people can learn to ^{by jobs it?} expand volunteerism and teach the youth to be the next generation of leaders that are committed to make positive improvements in the society.

Essay #2 had multiple corrections throughout and a section underlined, "Some people have fun to do work and get paid and some don't," with Dr. Jackson's comment in the margin of "not sure what you mean here," a comment that did not appear on any of the other focal students' essays. In the comments at the end of the essay, Dr. Jackson stressed the need for "editing and proofreading, especially for word choice and verb tense," underlining the words for emphasis. This time, he did not request that Mark bring the next draft to his office. Along with Mark, Becky had received an invitation to visit Dr. Jackson for help in the final comments on Essay #1, but apparently she was meeting his expectations for writing as evidenced by her grades and he did not write another invitation on subsequent essays. Furthermore, as she was already participating in office visits, perhaps the invitation was not necessary. Neither Kevin nor Dona were explicitly

invited in writing to participate in office visits, but that may be because Kevin was already going to Dr. Jackson's office and Dona's grades did not indicate a need for extra help. In Dr. Jackson's final comments, he complimented Mark on the topic choice and the emphasis of its significance, so again, Mark appeared to competently meet at least some of the content requirements, but not completely.

Mark did not share Essay #3 with me, but did tell me later that he had received another "C" on that paper. He gave me Essay #4, which was to explain a concept or theme from *Into the Wild*, one of the two novels read in class. It was similar to Essay #3 in that it was the same genre, an explanation of a concept. Dr. Jackson explained in class, Essay #4 was to have "a focused explanation," so there was no confusion as to what is being explained, "a readable plan" so the reader does not get lost, and "an appropriate strategy" for the approach or format (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of the expectations for this essay). For Essay #4, students were given the choice of possible approaches to this essay. He mentioned that they could write a profile, explain a concept, or write a combination of the two. He talked about either writing a narrative or using a comparison/contrasting strategy for their essay.

On an interesting note, Mark was absent on the day this particular essay was introduced, which may have further complicated his understanding of this type of writing. On Essay #4, Mark did not receive any checks or stars, and received only one underline. Dr. Jackson's first comment set the tone for the rest of his feedback: "Vague and incoherent intro." This was in contrast to the discussion in class regarding the importance

of not confusing the reader. Dr. Jackson appeared to be frustrated with Mark's essay as the grammar corrections were minimal even though the essay contained multiple errors, and instead wrote comments in the margin asking about coherence, relevance, and digressions, another breach of the in class instructions regarding clarity and unity of ideas for this paper.

The lack of proofreading corrections is in contrast to the other two essays on which Dr. Jackson had made multiple editing marks and rewrites. Twice, Dr Jackson seemed to insinuate that Mark did not understand the novel and wrote the abbreviation "comp" (comprehension issues) along with a wavy underline next to statements Mark made about the character in the novel and then questioned what Mark had said by writing in the margin, "really?" and "according to who?" During class discussions about *Into the Wild*, much was centered on the character as a person and his preparation to go into the wild alone. Mark's general statements about the character's having "no strategy" or "lacking knowledge or skills" suggested that Mark had neither been listening during the discussions nor engaging in a close reading of the novel, more indications of his lack of participation in as a member of this community. Additionally, Mark did not follow MLA style for the "Works Cited" page although Dr. Jackson had spent time in five class sessions on how to use MLA formatting style. Also, Mark did not follow the prompt regarding the requirement of citing at least two sources and did not follow MLA format in the in-text citations, which he formatted inconsistently:

“...in the end, of course, it changed almost nothing.” (Krauker, 155)

“...if you need energy, you’ve got to find food.” (*Bear Grylls Survival Manual*, p1)

In Dr. Jackson’s final comments, his frustration was evident, starting with his first line. For the last time in writing, he invited Mark to come to his office hours and encouraged him to “hopefully” take more time with the next and final essay. And again, Mark ignored Dr. Jackson’s request for an office visit.

In sum, Mark’s first two essays seemed to be somewhat in line with the instructor’s expectations. He wrote a narrative for the first one, following the guidelines set forth by the instructor, using the attributes of a “well told story.” The second essay was similar in format, and again, Mark wrote in the narrative genre which was one of the options offered, although according to the instructor, Mark needed to develop sections to a deeper level. Mark struggled with Standard English, and Essays #1 and #2 each had a similar number of errors. Problems compounded in Essay #4. In Essay #4, Mark seemed to struggle with the genre required for this assignment, an explanation rather than a narrative. According to Dr. Jackson, Mark’s essay was incoherent and difficult to follow, and he pointed this out all the way through the piece. His writing was further impeded by multiple errors in grammar and usage. The final grade of D- on Essay #4 is an indication of Mark’s struggle with this assignment. Mark’s apparent inability to completely meet the expectations for college writing and his non-participation in the key routine of one on one

conversation with Dr. Jackson was an indication of Mark being outside this community and therefore limited his potential of full membership in this class.

Perspective #3 – Writing as a Member of the College Community

From the very beginning, Mark appeared to struggle with joining this new community. As evidenced above, his level of non-participation in the practices and routines of this class increased throughout the quarter. He struggled with balancing his multi-membership in other groups when he missed several class sessions due to an injury that he incurred during participating with his “dance group,” another community of practice of which he was apparently a member. He did not participate in Dr. Jackson’s office hours, even though doing so was an implied routine in the classroom as well as an explicitly written invitation on two of Mark’s essays. Mark was not eager to talk to me and after our initial conversation, and as we did not talk formally again, I was not able to question him as to his reasons for not going to Dr. Jackson’s office. So in a real sense, Mark “left” me just as he’d “left” Dr. Jackson. Clearly, Mark did not display an eagerness to engage in Freshman Composition 1 and its routines. I suggest that a critical factor in Mark’s apparent inability to join this community was Dr. Jackson’s subtle withdrawing of Mark’s legitimacy as a potential member of the community as well as Mark’s response to the Dr. Jackson.

Several times during class throughout the quarter, Dr. Jackson made references in class to students at this university who struggled with written English and with grammar,

and the comments on Mark's Essay #1 appeared to place him in the "struggling" group. Looking at Dr. Jackson's "voices" in his response to Mark's essays helps us to see this occurring. On Mark's Essay #1, Dr. Jackson started out as the "counselor" and made several positive marks in the margins indicating a "nice start," with check marks and stars throughout. In his written comments, he complimented Mark on a "well chosen incident" and "vivid details," even calling this a "promising essay." These were all encouraging words and legitimized Mark's first attempt at writing in college. While it was not a perfect essay, Dr. Jackson suggested through his comments that the potential for Mark to become a college writer was there. After those initial comments, Dr. Jackson shifted to his university voice. He indicated a need for more reflection on the significance of the described event, a reiteration of his classroom instruction regarding the need for narrative writing to include a "well told story, effective description, and an indication of significance." He also made multiple corrections on Mark's paper and in his written comment pointed out that the frequency of grammar and usage errors were "distracting," echoing the College Composition Program Manual that said this class was to teach students "to use the complete composing process recursively, including invention, planning, drafting, revising, *proofreading*, and *editing*" (emphases mine) (see Chapter 3). His final written comment again reflected the counselor voice with his inclusive "let's": "Let's work on weeding them (*the grammar issues*⁴) out this quarter," an opening for

⁴ Italics are my words explaining the preceding pronoun.

Mark to work together with him, to be part of the community of writers as it were. It is interesting to note how in this essay Dr. Jackson surrounded his corrective comments with positive encouragement in the beginning and an invitation to work together at the end. This pattern of comments did not appear in the next two essays.

When Mark received graded Essay #1 in class, he had shown it to me with what appeared to be an apologetic face for the “C.” As he told me later, he did not respond to the invitation to Dr. Jackson’s office hours. While I can’t know Mark’s thoughts, it is possible he did not recognize Dr. Jackson’s as a resource for help with writing his essays or he did not feel comfortable meeting with Dr. Jackson in a one on one situation in spite of the implied and overt invitations to do so.

Essay #2 was also covered in Dr. Jackson’s corrections, suggesting perhaps that Mark was now one of “those students” at the university who struggled with the English language. Similar to his comments on Essay #1, the final written comments on Essay #2 began with positive remarks, “a well chosen topic...with a clear sense of its importance and value.” Then Dr. Jackson moved into his university voice with the suggestions that there was room for “more detail and room for more dialogue.” He also pointed out, as in Essay #1, the need for editing and proofreading. This comment differed from Essay #1’s in that there was no invitation to his office, no “let’s work together.” Instead of finishing with a counselor’s offer of help, the comments ended with the University’s expectation for writing that does not need corrections. Dr. Jackson appeared to withdraw the previously offered path of access to his office.

Dr. Jackson's marks on Essay #4 exhibited a distinct level of frustration. In contrast to his comments on Essays #1 and #2, there were no opening positive remarks and no encouragement in the final comments. Instead, Dr. Jackson made a short suggestion to bring in a draft and an admonition to "take more time with the next essay." His asking Mark to come to his office differed considerably from what he wrote in the first essay, which read like a friendly invitation, somewhat colloquial ("Be sure to") and inclusive ("we" – meaning Dr. Jackson and Mark):

"Be sure to bring a draft...by my office...so we can talk about these (*grammar and usage errors*) in more detail."

In Essay #4, the comment read as a straight-forward directive ("bring") written after comments about an incoherent essay and a reference to the next one to be written:

"...and bring a draft of it (*the next essay*) to my office."

Moreover, this time the purpose of a visit, if Mark chose to participate, was to figure out a "topic and plan," a much larger issue than one of grammar and usage. This lack of encouraging comments appears to reflect a withdrawal of access to the university community through the counselor as sponsor. In his final comment, Dr. Jackson wrote, "Hopefully you'll be able to take more time with the next essay..." an indirect criticism

regarding Mark's choices for how to spend his time, but unless Mark came to his office for help, Dr. Jackson didn't appear to have much confidence that he would do any better. Unfortunately, due to Mark's unwillingness to talk to me about his experiences in this class, I have a limited view of his thoughts and can only view his responses to Dr. Jackson's feedback as reflected in the decline of writing quality and lack of contact with Dr. Jackson or the other students in the class.

Ultimately, as indicated, Mark's grades were C, C, and D- on the essays that he gave me and C on Essay #3 which I did not see. In a final conversation on the last day of the quarter prior to the final, Mark told me the class had proven to be more difficult than he had anticipated. He was used to high school teachers who "would often let mistakes slide." He faulted the instructor for being "so picky and counting off for every mistake." He also said, interestingly, that he was ready to "go on" to the next class. After several failed attempts to reach him during spring quarter, I contacted Dr. Jackson who informed me that Mark had received a C- in the class, which was not a passing grade, and that at some point prior to college graduation Mark would have to retake the class.

Key Findings

Initially, Mark seemed to be a good though not excellent candidate for successful entry into the college writing community. On one level, he seemed to be comfortable with being a college student as he fit right in socially with his flips flops, skateboard, and

electronic devices, and he had passed the written entrance exam. However, three key findings related to Mark's membership in this community of practice as well as his writing change this perception.

- Mark did not participate much in the important routines and practices of Freshman Composition 1.
- The instructor gradually withdrew his fostering of Mark's "legitimacy" as a member of the community via comments – and ultimately paucity of comments -- on his papers.
- The quality of Mark's writing declined throughout the quarter.

Freshman Composition 1 was an introduction to college level writing. While Mark was familiar with "school" practices, having graduated from a magnet high school and having passed the entrance writing exam for the University, the expectations of this class and his response to them seemed to ultimately cause him difficulties. On the surface, Mark understood and participated in some of the routines-- the use of technology, some classroom behaviors, and essay writing. He did not participate in others -- office visits, group participation, and consistent attendance, speaking up in class. In the context of this class, it appeared Mark either did not understand how to make sense of what constituted this community and being part of it, or chose not to understand. While it likely not the case that Dr. Jackson's responses to Mark as a student and as a

writer through written comments and classroom comments was the *cause* of the decline in quality of Mark's essays, Dr. Jackson's and Mark's interactions surely round out the portrait of this decline, and it is not surprising that Dr. Jackson's responses to Mark and Mark's responses to Dr. Jackson boded poorly for Mark's membership in this writing community.

Granted, aside from our one interview, I only saw and talked to Mark during class time. There could have been a multitude of mitigating factors that contributed to his difficulties in becoming a successful member of the college writing community. While Mark's struggles cannot be fully explained, his experience does raise some key issues surrounding membership in a writing community, especially the mutual granting of legitimacy and authority between the instructor and newcomer. This instructor-newcomer relationship may well influence the newcomer's level of participation in the avenues offered toward community membership.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this dissertation study, my key purpose was to contribute to educators' awareness and understanding of the social/cultural processes at work as freshman students attempted to enter a new writing community at a major university and to a better understanding of their writing during the transition. For the students in this study, this entrance into a new writing community came with its own challenges and difficulties; some students appeared to make the transition relatively easily while others struggled. Drawing primarily on Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) notion of Communities of Practice and the elements inherent in entering a new community of practice, I found that, while some measure of participation was part of the process of successfully joining of a new community, the mutual granting of legitimacy by the instructor and the student was key in fostering students' potential inclusion and eventual full membership in this new community of practice.

At the beginning of my study, I discussed previous research that had been done in educational settings that addressed the issue of students moving from one context to another as well as learning to write in a variety of contexts. My findings align with multiple other studies discussing the need to learn with regards to joining a new community of writers and the importance of learning as a part of this process of joining.

But in addition to previous research, my study offers another perspective on the experiences, challenges, and successes of high school students who met the criteria set up by the University to enter Freshman Composition 1. My study also looks at how the community is built through student and instructor interactions and the avenues of access offered to the students through three instructor voices. My findings create an awareness of the complicated process that even seemingly successful students go through as they join a new community.

Participation

Wenger (1998) maintained that to become a member in a new community necessitates a certain level of participation, whether it be as a fully immersed member or only as a member on the periphery (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger also specified that participation does not necessarily mean collaboration, but involves all types of relationships, “conflictual as well as harmonious” (p. 56) and that this participation shapes one’s experience as well as the community itself. Simply learning the routines and expectations of the new group and then participating in them is more complex than it might sound. Learning within a community of practice is a process that takes place not individually, but instead requires a “participation framework” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 15) that is continually mediated by different perspectives and interpretations of fellow participants. Being a newcomer creates the dilemma of participating in the existing practice with the assumed intent of becoming a member while at the same time, helping

to shape the community as the newcomer discovers his or her own way of being and role within the community. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning requires a subtle dance between the existing community and its members as well as the newcomer as norms and expectations are negotiated and renegotiated based on new interpretations while the community changes to reflect the interaction of its members. This process of learning takes time, requires understanding that allows the newcomers to choose what to know and what to ignore in reference to acceptable routines, and necessitates the ability to adapt to an ever-changing environment. In short, entering a new community can be a difficult and lengthy process requiring the meshing of multiple perspectives and participation practices, and more so for some students than others. Wenger (1991) also wrote about the importance of legitimacy granting by the novice as a predecessor to learning how to be in a new community. While I found that the focal students' varied levels and kinds of participation likely mediated their potential membership in the freshman writing class, I found in particular that legitimacy granting was key in their joining this community.

I focused on four focal students and their different experiences. Kevin came to class with an awareness of university practices that he had most likely brought from home. Kevin recognized Dr. Jackson's authority as an instructor and his legitimacy as a resource. He seemed to understand what was expected from a student, was willing to engage in the expected practices, and, in turn, appeared to become a fully functioning

member of the community. Becky had to take a summer class to enroll in Freshman Composition 1, so she also came to this class with an awareness of university practices that she had learned during the summer. Similar to Kevin, Becky appeared to accept Dr. Jackson's authority and legitimacy as a resource. She also appeared to fully participate in the practices and routines of the college writing community and by the end of the quarter, appeared to become a member of the community as she had successfully met the expectations of Dr. Jackson. Dona brought to the class a sense of university practices and a measure of self-confidence in her own ability to produce college writing. In contrast to Kevin and Becky, she did not choose to utilize Dr. Jackson's office visits as a resource, yet she still granted legitimacy to Dr. Jackson and the university as evidenced by her concern about her grades, her recognition of education's value, and the desire to meet Dr. Jackson's expectations for writing. Although Dona's participation was of a different kind than Kevin and Becky's, she also passed the class and maintained high scores on her writing. While Kevin, Becky and Dona participated at varying levels, recognized Dr. Jackson's legitimacy, and were successful in the freshman writing community, Mark had a different story. Mark likely brought with him an awareness of university practices by way of his sister's experiences, yet chose minimal participation in key practices in this community. He did not seem to recognize Dr. Jackson's legitimacy as a resource for writing, and in turn did not appear to be granted legitimacy as a potential college writer as evidenced by Dr. Jackson's comments on his essays. Even though Dr. Jackson offered

himself as a resource to help Mark with his writing, Mark did not take up the offer and, by quarter's end, appeared to fall short of joining the college writing community.

In my study, I found the legitimacy granted by Dr. Jackson with regard to the students' as potential community members, as well as the students' granting of legitimacy to the university and Dr. Jackson, to be key factors in students' movement toward membership. Dr. Jackson offered multiple avenues of access to the college writing community. Through oral comments in class and written comments on essays, he set up his expectations for college writing and held students accountable for these expectations, offered himself as a resource and counselor, and identified with the students in his classroom discourse. I suggest that the varying levels of success in entering the writing community reflected more of my focal students' view of the university and Dr. Jackson as legitimate and his recognition of their potential than their type and level of participation.

Writing

In addition to creating an awareness of freshmen writers entering a new community of practice, and of the key element of legitimacy-granting in this process, my study took a new perspective on what we can learn about student writing as students interpret and adapt to this new community. Through analysis of student writing and instructor written feedback, I developed a way to read and assess written comments through the multiple voices of the instructor. These "voices" offered different avenues of

access to college writing, variously fostering or limiting students' ability to meet Dr. Jackson's expectations for their essays. Dr. Jackson's *university voice* reinforced the criteria for college level writing and held students accountable for meeting these criteria. With his *counselor voice*, he offered to come alongside the students in support as well as in some cases, supply university discourse. And his *student voice* aligned him with the students as someone who could empathize with their current status and challenges. While these voices were present, the students' willingness to take the offerings appeared to affect their ability to produce appropriate writing.

When Kevin, Becky, and Dona received positive comments on their essays through Dr. Jackson's university and counselor voices, Dr. Jackson recognized their potential as college writers and served to push them closer to full membership in the community. This recognition and granting of legitimacy validated their own writing as being in alignment with his expectations and in turn fostered their ability to continue to write to meet Dr. Jackson's expectations. In contrast, on Mark's essays, Dr. Jackson's comments appeared to call into question his ability to produce college level writing, which in turn may have contributed to the decline in Mark's writing production and his unwillingness to engage in classroom practices. Initially, Dr. Jackson's corrective comments on Mark's essays may have been an effort to convey to Mark the seriousness of his mistakes and the need to correct them. As the instructor, Dr. Jackson needed to hold Mark accountable and may have been hoping that Mark would respond in such a

way as to bring him closer to the writing expectations of the class. With the counselor voice and the invitation to his office, Dr. Jackson offered an avenue for Mark to take to make the necessary corrections. As Mark did not appear to respond to Dr. Jackson's offers of help, the written feedback took on a different tone or voice. Dr. Jackson did not coach Mark or use his counselor voice in the comments on Mark's later papers, nor did he offer Mark a way of writing with specific discourse examples as he had done for Kevin and Becky. At the end of the quarter, the scarcity of encouragement suggested that Dr. Jackson may have been frustrated with Mark's lack of effort and ceased to view Mark as a potential college writer. It is probable that Mark and Dr. Jackson mutually influenced one another to respond as they did to one another.

Examining different instructor voices provides a different way of talking about instructor feedback and the impact it may have on student performance, a complex process of interpretation and negotiation as students incorporate instructor feedback into subsequent writing. It is important to look at the instructor's different voices as a display of implicit values placed upon student writing while also providing various avenues toward meeting the expectations of college writing. A student's ability to interpret the offerings of access and respond accordingly may have far reaching effects on the journey in learning to write at the college level.

In Summary

As researchers continue to grapple with the complexities and difficulties of entering a new writing community, even for those students already deemed by the university to be competent writers, this study furthers the goal of understanding student processes of transition. Students become members not only through participation in the practices and routines of a new community, but more importantly through the recognition of their legitimacy as potential members and in turn, their recognition of the legitimacy of the community that they are trying to join. In this study, I saw legitimacy extended to the students through the instructor's multiple voices which functioned to help shape the community, with each student reacting in their own way to these voices. For researchers focusing on writing communities and their sociocultural dynamics, my study provides a starting point for looking more deeply at the dynamics.

Implications for Further Research

This study was done in one university, one classroom, during one quarter, with a focus on four students. While the results may add to the growing knowledge of freshman writers in transition, raising issues and questions, there is room for more research. Adaptation to a new community takes time, and this study afforded only a glimpse of a potentially much larger process. How would these same issues of participation and legitimacy granting play out over time? Also, the process and implications of granting legitimacy need more study. How should this granting of legitimacy affect classroom

discourse, both oral and written? What avenues of access should be offered to students and how can instructors encourage more students to take up the offerings? Any research that can further the understanding of student successes and struggles as they learn to be college level writers is of value in the educational system where, often, writing is a primary gatekeeper to success. As well, research that can help to create an awareness of the process of joining a new community and the critical part the instructor plays in the process is of value.

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APPENDIX A

Essay Prompts 1-4 from Freshman Composition 1

Essay #1

“Remembering an Event” - Write an essay about an event in your life that will engage readers and that will, at the same time, help them understand the significance of the event. Tell your story dramatically and vividly.

Consult *Elements of Writing*, to review the features that make this kind of essay effective. Consult for suggestions as to how you can come up with ideas, plan, draft, and revise your essay.

This essay needs to be at least three pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 3. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 7. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to MyWork in order for you to receive credit for the assignment

Essay #2

“The Profile” - Write an essay about an intriguing person, group of people, place, or activity in your community. Observe your subject closely, and then present what you have learned in a way that informs and engages your readers.

Consult *Elements of Writing*, to review the features that make a profile effective. Consult suggestions as to how you can come up with a topic, plan, draft, and revise your essay.

This essay needs to be at least four pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 17. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 24. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to MyWork in order for you to receive credit for the assignment.

Essay #3

Write an essay about a concept that interests you and that you want to study further. When you have a good understanding of the concept, explain it to your readers, considering carefully what they already know about it and how your essay might add to what they know.

Carefully read *Elements of Writing* to review the features that make this kind of essay effective. Consult for suggestions as to how you can come up with ideas, plan, draft, and revise your essay.

This essay needs to be at least three pages long, typed and double-spaced. A draft of this essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 3. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 7. In addition, an E-copy of your essay must be submitted to *MyWork* in order for you to receive credit for the assignment.

Essay #4

“Exploring Life at the Limits” – Choose one theme or concept that has emerged from our reading and discussion of Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* and write an essay in which you help your reader to arrive at a fuller and deeper understanding of it. Use whatever combination of writing strategies you judge to be most effective. Be sure to incorporate development from your own observation and experience.

To aid you in developing your reflections, you are required to make significant use of *Into the Wild*. Provide thoughtfully chosen examples and quotations that logically develop your points. Make use of at least one additional source. Be sure to cite all sources according to the MLA style. This essay needs to be approximately five pages long. A draft is due on Wednesday, November 16. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 21. In order to receive credit for your assignment, an E-copy must be posted on *MyWork*.

APPENDIX B

Transcript Conventions

<i>(italics)</i>	indicates my notes/commentary or extra verbal utterances such as <i>(laughs)</i>
[]	indicates overlapped speech and brackets are lined up to indicate where the overlap occurs
(un)	means recording was unclear
...	indicates a speaker pause
ALL CAPS	indicates speaker emphasis