Fall 2015

Talking back: a qualitative study of reflective writing in a first-year college composition classroom

Mariah L. Steele
University of Iowa

TALKING BACK: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF REFLECTIVE WRITING IN A FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

Mariah L. Steele

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning
(Language, Literacy, and Culture)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

December 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Carolyn Colvin

Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Mariah L. Steele

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy, and Culture) at the December 2015 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
Carolyn Colvin, Thesis Supervisor

_____
Bonnie Sunstein

_____
Rachel Williams

_____
Carol Severino

_____
Amanda Thein

_____
Rossina Liu

To Kurt and Sylvia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Carolyn Colvin, my advisor and chair. In addition to pushing me when I needed it, Carolyn was incredibly patient with me as I worked to balance dissertation writing with teaching, a family, and the various challenges that life can bring. She helped me turn my vague ideas into a concrete project, talked me through a number of uncertainties and stumbling blocks, and was an exceptional reader who made me think more thoroughly and critically about my own work. I am certain that without her guidance and encouragement I would not have finished this dissertation. Carolyn will always be my role model when it comes to working with students.

In addition, I thank the members of my committee for their excellent suggestions and ideas. Thanks to Bonnie Sunstein for asking me great questions, and offering recommendations for future reading; to Carol Severino for reading so closely, and for generously offering to read future drafts of my work; and to Rachel Williams for suggesting a great venue and idea for a publication based on this research, and for encouraging me to embrace and share my own voice more vigorously. Both Amanda Thein and Rossina Liu generously agreed to be members of this committee even though they barely knew me. And both shared with me their expertise in ways that will only make my work better.

I thank the Graduate College for a Summer Fellowship which allowed me to devote time to organizing and analyzing my data.

I am grateful to the community I have found over the last few years in my new hometown: the Basham/Cramers, the Gutknechts, the Guzmans, the Maedas, the Grupico/Jacksons, and the Taylors were always willing to take my daughter, to fill in for

me at her school, to feed my family, to support and encourage me, and to celebrate with me. They all made it possible for me to complete this dissertation.

Jayme Hansen and Renée Rogers are the best friends a person can have. Although both are farther away than I would like them to be, and I see them less often that I should, they have never stopped encouraging me, and have provided endless sources of support. Renée received many more frantic text messages than anyone should, and always responded with positive words, grace, and kindness. Jayme is a brilliant listener, astute advice-giver, and always, always makes me laugh.

In addition to being a steady source of encouragement, laughter, and inspiration, Lenore Maybaum has modeled for me what it means to be a mother, teacher, scholar, and writer. She is brilliant and kind, and I count myself lucky to have her as a colleague and friend.

Mikki Smith was a delightful and encouraging writing partner, even from afar. Our simultaneous Pomodoro sessions helped me to accomplish a great deal in a relatively small amount of time, and our chats in between sessions gave me something to look forward to. I am hopeful that we can continue to work together in the future.

When it comes to thanking my family, I hardly know where to begin. My parents, Daphne and Thomas Steele, have been supportive in every way possible, for many, many years. Everything I have achieved is because of them. Khamsin and Dan Giedd helped in countless ways big and small, and were always up for celebrating the little accomplishments along the way. Kurt Rahmlow never, ever wavered in his belief that I could do this, even when I was convinced I could not. He would take time out from whatever he was doing to talk with me when I was stuck, and to provide his always smart,

thoughtful, and incisive ideas about my writing and research. Sylvia Rahmlow provided many a distraction from my work, left sticky-notes of encouragement on my keyboard, and made me laugh every single day. Her excitement and pride that I finished this dissertation made it all worth it.

Finally, I thank my students. This project would not have happened without them and their willingness to share their work, thoughts, and ideas with me. I learn so much from them every single day.

ABSTRACT

Though scholars have discussed how reflective writing can benefit students in college-level writing classes, little research has focused on students' perceptions of this kind of writing. This study examines the curriculum of a particular first-year writing course, as well as student reflective writing that was created for the class. Research questions focus on how students used reflective writing to articulate their understandings of audience and academic discourse, two curricular concerns that tend to be prevalent in first-year writing courses. To answer these questions, I studied examples of student reflective essays, conducted interviews with eight students, and maintained researcher field notes. I analyzed this data using discourse analysis to understand how the institution constructed itself, students, and me. I also explored how students used language to engage in particular building tasks associated with writing for particular audiences and engaging in particular academic discourses. My findings suggest that students perceive that reflective writing can lead to opportunities for expanded dialogues between students and teachers, and can facilitate student learning of academic discourse.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Reflective writing is writing that students do about their learning. Reflective writing assignments are common in First-Year Writing classes, but little research has been done that considers how students perceive the reflective writing that they do. This study examines the coursework of a particular first-year writing course, as well as reflective writing that students did in the class.

The aim of the study is to answer questions about how students use reflective writing to learn about two key elements of the class: audience and academic language. To answer these questions, I studied examples of student reflective essays, conducted interviews with eight students, and kept notes about my research and teaching. I analyzed this data to understand how the university represented itself, students, and me in public documents connected with the class. I also explored how students used language to describe how they wrote for particular audiences and whether or not they engaged in academic writing. My findings suggest that students perceive that reflective writing can lead to opportunities for enhanced communication between students and teachers, and can help them to learn the language of writing for the university.

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INTRODUCTION

Context and Purpose

When I walked into new-instructor orientation at Southwest State University in August, 2011, I had been told I would be teaching two sections of College Writing I. I had a packet of assignments and rubrics I had received via email, and a textbook I had never seen before, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee (2009). I was more than a little anxious, because I had almost no formal education in ancient rhetoric, and I was about to begin teaching a curriculum that was full of unfamiliar terms like *progymnasmata*, *kairos*, and *chreia*. But I had been teaching college-level writing for 13 years, and I reasoned that with my experience, two long days of orientation, and some intensive study of the course textbook, I would be able to put together a course that would fulfill curricular requirements and be engaging for students.

Two days later, as I left orientation to go home to put together my syllabi, I realized that my lack of familiarity with ancient rhetoric was the least of my concerns, because we had a textbook to help me with that. What I was anxious about was the reflective writing my students would be required to do. Since I began teaching writing 18 years ago, I have taught composition at three different research universities. I have also taught writing-intensive literature classes to non-majors, and I have taught technical writing. During my time as a Writing Studio Director at a small, private, liberal arts college, I taught writing in disciplines ranging from Economics to Theater. But I had never had to require that my students do reflective writing.

I had read about both theoretical and practical aspects of reflection, and as I gradually became a more experienced and confident teacher, I began to consider how to incorporate reflective writing into the classroom. I try to spend a great deal of time talking with my students about their own writing, and I have found that those conversations frequently focus on reflective thinking—what students think about what they have written, and what the act of writing has helped them learn about their own writing, and about writing as a discipline. These conversations, combined with a new job teaching a curriculum in which reflection is heavily emphasized, are what initially led me to this project.

My experience as a writing teacher tells me that reflection is important, and numerous scholars (for example, Anson, 2000; Beach, 1976, 1984, 1985, 1989; Dewey, 1933; Kathpalia & Heah, 2008; King & Kitchener, 1994; Pianko, 1979; Schön, 1983, 1987, 1991; Yancey, 1998) reinforce this notion. Yet, in my own writing, I tend to avoid reflection—exploring and articulating what I have learned and what I think about my own learning—and it was not until my third graduate program, the one for which I am writing this dissertation, that I was asked to do any of my own reflective writing in a formal manner. In addition, as much as I believe in the inherent value of reflective writing, I have long struggled to include reflection in my classrooms in a way that feels meaningful to me and to my students. Students often complain that reflective writing is "just an extra assignment." They ask me why they have to keep thinking about an assignment they are "done with, and don't want to think about any more."

In spite of my own frustrations and my students' sometime resistance, I have continued to include reflective writing in my teaching as a way to help students

understand what they are doing when they write, what they are learning when they write, and how they are becoming part of an academic community that holds them to certain standards and has particular expectations of them. In addition, reading and responding to my students' reflective pieces has helped me to learn more about the ways in which I am, and am not, helping to introduce them to what will be required of them as college writers after they leave my class. Many first year writing courses are designed to prepare students for the kinds of writing they will be expected to do, and do successfully, as college students. But most students, with the possible exception of those who go on to major in English, Creative Writing, or Technical Writing, do not take a writing class beyond their required first-year composition class(es). I have had colleagues from other departments tell me they feel they do not have the time, or even the expertise, to teach writing in addition to covering the content of their courses. As a result, oftentimes the expectation is that students who successfully complete first year writing will be ready to meet the challenges of writing assignments they will be asked to undertake in other classes in other disciplines.

In my own experience, instructors across campuses commonly assume that once a freshman has successfully completed her writing requirement, which is often done in the first year of college study, she is prepared to go on to other classes and demonstrate that she is able to follow the conventions of academic writing that are expected of college students. Zamel and Spack (1998) note:

> "[W]hen students travel from one classroom to another, they find that each has its unique conventions, concepts, and terms. At the same time that each classroom culture brings with it a particular language and set of assumptions, like all cultures

> it is inevitably shaped by the interaction of students, teacher, and texts. Collectively, classroom experiences across the curriculum require that students become fluent in multiple ways of reading and writing. In other words, students are expected to be conversant in a variety of academic literacies." (pp. ix-x)

The first-year writing teacher, it is assumed, will prepare students for all of these different cultures, and will do so in a semester, or at most, an academic year.

But assumptions like these are often based on an incomplete understanding of what happens in writing classrooms. For writing instructors, such assumptions can be a result of the goals we have—stated or not—for the class. Often, they are also a result of goals that have been stated for us by writing program directors, department chairs, administrators, and state legislatures. For faculty members outside of English, Composition, and Rhetoric departments or programs, such assumptions about students' understanding of the conventions of academic writing might be based on their expectations of what first-year writing *should* be providing for students; such expectations might be very different from those of the entities responsible for overseeing and funding writing programs. And what often gets lost in trying to meet the varying expectations of what a writing program is supposed to do is the students. That is, what we tend not to do is ask students how confident *they* feel about their comprehension of and ability to follow such conventions.

This dissertation represents my attempts to understand how undergraduate students in a first-year writing course develop and perceive connections between three common elements of such courses: reflective writing, audience, and academic discourse. I begin by analyzing the language that describes the course and its purpose, to consider

how such language constructs institutional identities for students, and how it constructs my own institutional identity. I then explore how reflective writing might help students to understand that different rhetorical tasks have different audiences. Finally, I consider what, if any, relationship exists between students' reflective writing and academic discourse.

Defining Reflective Writing

In 1933, John Dewey, who believed that reflection was an important part of learning but one that needed to be taught, described reflection as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Although Dewey was particularly interested in reflective thinking, his ideas about the roles of reflection in educational practice have informed numerous scholars who have written about reflective writing in composition studies (for instance, see Lyons, 2010; Rodgers, 2002; Yancey, 1998).

Donald Schön, one of the most frequently cited writers in scholarship on reflection and reflective writing, cites Dewey's work as having a strong influence on his own theories about reflection (1983, 1987, 1991). Schön's ideas about learning and reflection provide the foundation for much of the research and scholarship on reflective writing in composition studies. Specifically, Schön's (1983) learning theory of reflection-in-action, which involves not only the individual thinking about what she is doing while she is doing it, but also the process of thinking back about what she has done, recognizing errors or unanticipated outcomes, acting on this recognition, and changing her behavior to

improve her proficiency, has become a fundamental aspect of reflection in the writing classroom.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, composition researchers and instructors began publishing research about the role of reflective writing in the college composition classroom (Beach, 1976, 1985; Beach & Eaton, 1984; Beaven, 1979; Pianko, 1979). Such research developed out of studies of students' composing processes that began in the 1970's (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Odell, Cooper, & Courts, 1978; Vatz, 1973), and although reflection was not a new concept in higher education, its purpose and value in writing instruction was just beginning to be widely studied and recognized. Most simply, reflective writing refers to the processes and texts through which students demonstrate their thinking about their own writing (Anson, 2000; Evans, 2007; Kathpalia & Heah, 2008; Latta & Lauer, 2000; O'Neill, 1998; Smith & Yancey, 2000; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Tucker, 2000; Yancey, 1998). As Yancey (1998) notes, however, reflection is more complicated than simply asking students to sit down and write about what they wrote. Yancey (1998) writes:

> Reflection, then, is the dialectical process by which we develop and achieve, first, specific goals for learning; second, strategies for reaching these goals; and third, means of determining whether or not we have met those goals or other goals. Speaking generally, reflection includes the three processes of projection, retrospection (or review), and revision. For writing, it likewise includes three processes:
>
> 1. goal-setting, revisiting, and refining
> 2. text-revising in the light of retrospection

3. the articulating of what learning has taken place, as embodied in various texts as well as in the processes used by the writer (1998, p.6)

As Yancey notes, reflective writing involves more than just looking back at what has been written; it is an ongoing, goal-oriented process that involves self-assessment, revision, and the ability to exhibit insight into one's own learning processes and experiences.

As time went on, much of the research on reflective writing practices began to be based on studies of institutions that used portfolio projects to evaluate students' progress in writing classes (Allen, 1995; Allen, et al, 1997; Black, et al, 1994; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 1993; Yancey, 1992; Yancey & Weiser, 1997). In the 1990's, however, instructors began to use their own classes to conduct case studies of what and how students learned through the process of reflective writing. Yancey's (1998) seminal work, *Reflection in the Writing Classroom,* was one of the earliest book-length studies of the practice of reflection in the writing classroom. In describing her project, Yancey writes,

> Perhaps what was most interesting about these diverse reflective texts . . . was the story that they told about the writers of those texts. It was a story about how they learned and what they learned, about how that both dovetailed with what I'd planned and departed from that agenda. (p. 17)

For Yancey, the story of what is going on behind the scenes, of the ways students not only meet, but also subvert and surpass, her expectations is ultimately the interesting story that comes out of reflective writing. In this research project, I describe some of these behind-the-scenes goings on, both from my own and my students' perspectives, in an attempt to determine the extent to which the reflective writing students are assigned

aids them in meeting the goals of the classes they are taking, as well as those of the writing program in general and the university at large.

One of my frustrations with the extant research on reflective writing is that it tends to not let students speak for themselves about their reflection. Composition researchers frequently quote from reflective pieces, and interpret what students have written, but do not often ask students themselves to reflect upon the process and experience of doing reflective writing. In addition, reflective writing is often presented as something that exists separate from and in contrast to conventional academic discourse.

The opportunity for this research project was presented by the fact that I am currently teaching in a program that integrates reflective writing into virtually every assignment students are required to complete. As I describe in greater detail in the Methodology section, the class in which I conducted my research was a challenging course that asked students to quickly become fluent in terms and concepts derived from ancient rhetorical traditions. Many of these terms and concepts are quite difficult to grasp, and I have found that reflective writing allows my students to explore their understandings of these concepts, and their related ideas, in a lower-stakes manner. That is, reflective pieces allowed them to tell me what they struggled with, what they did not understand, and what they felt good about when they were working on their assignments. These pieces allowed me to see more than just the finished paper, and helped me to determine who needed additional help, what I needed to spend more time on, and who seemed to be really "getting it."

At the same time, however, it has not always been clear to me how the reflective writing students are required to do in their College Writing Courses at Southwest State

supports the stated outcomes of the class. As I continue to assign reflective writing, and to watch students move on to other classes in other disciplines, I continue to wonder about the extent to which reflective writing helps them to recognize and understand the ways in which they are becoming familiar with ideas of academic discourse.

Academic Writing and First-Year Composition

The idea that there exists a commonly understood and widely recognized definition of academic writing is, of course, false. The very term academic writing is fallaciously monolithic, and has come to be widely and variously critiqued (Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Rankins-Robertson, Cahill, Roen, & Glau, 2010; Zamel & Spack, 1998). In spite of such critiques, however, there is a sense in post-secondary education that successful students can both recognize and accomplish writing that meets certain standards of clarity, sophistication, voice, and tone, and that acknowledges and uses authoritative resources (see, for example, Negretti, 2012; Thonney, 2011). Although first-year composition classes are often their own discrete courses that have very specific themes, agendas, and goals, one of the mythologies surrounding them frequently suggests that they serve to prepare students to know how meet the expectations for writing that they will be presented with in different disciplines and at different levels of study.

My feelings about the role of first-year composition in the teaching of academic discourse are as complicated as the debate that surrounds the loaded phrase "academic discourse" itself. On one hand, I recognize that few of my students will go on to take more writing classes after the class they take with me; I also recognize and understand how frustrated some of my colleagues are with what they see as students' inadequate writing skills, and I want my students to leave my classes feeling confident that they can

respond to the various challenges that they will face as college writers in these colleagues' classes. At the same time, I don't believe that one semester, or even one year, is enough time to teach students the conventions of academic writing. I know how difficult it is to address the varying interests, needs, and backgrounds of 25 (or more) students in a class, and I know that for many students, and freshmen in particular, academic discourse can seem like a foreign language. I also know how powerful "non-traditional" writing can be, in that it can allow students to find their voices, to explore issues that are meaningful to them, and can even get resistant writers to come to enjoy the process and experience of writing. Reflective writing, in fact, is a "non-traditional" format that allows students to explore in more flexible and familiar ways the more formal, academic writing they are often asked to do in first-year courses. That is, it is my contention that reflective writing can serve to bridge the gap between formal, academic writing, and more personal, informal writing that students may be more comfortable with and may have more experience with, and I intend to explore these and other ideas with this research project.

The following research questions are informed by reading scholarly work, and have also emerged from my own teaching. These questions guided both my research for and analysis in this dissertation.

Research Questions

1. What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing?

2. In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time?
3. How do students characterize reflective writing they do in first-year composition in relation to the academic writing they also do in first-year composition?
4. What evidence is available to show how students learn to do reflective writing?

In the chapters that follow you will find my attempts to answer these questions. I begin by providing an overview of the theories and literature relevant to reflective writing, student perceptions of audience, and the teaching and learning of academic discourse. In Chapter Three I describe Southwest State, the course in which I conducted my study, and my methods for collecting and analyzing data. In Chapter Four, I analyze particular aspects of the course, College Writing II, as they are set out in documents that provide the foundation for the course curriculum. In Chapters Five and Six, I look at student writings and transcripts of interviews I conducted with students to understand their perceptions of reflective writing, audience, and academic discourse as they developed over the course of a semester. In Chapter Seven, I discuss some of the implications of this study, and describe how College Writing II has changed. I also suggest avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the difficulties in writing this dissertation has been navigating the various terms that scholars use when discussing what I have come to call reflective writing. When I began my research, I was using the term reflection almost casually, to refer to any kind of usually informal writing that involved students looking back at and thinking about previous writing they had done, and writing about the experience of working on and thinking about that writing. There are three main terms that scholars generally use to talk about this kind of writing: metacognition, self-assessment, and reflection/reflective writing. I am using reflection and reflective writing in this dissertation for two reasons. First, these are the terms that are used in the class in which I conducted my research. Second, I believe these terms can describe a process that is broader than what is often characterized as metacognition, and almost always encompass elements of self-assessment. The process of reflection certainly may include assessment, but the term self-assessment strikes me as being limiting, particularly in the minds of students, who hear "assessment" and automatically think of grades that are given to them by an authority figure.

While a number of the studies I will discuss make compelling links between self-assessment and reflection, many of the texts I review below also emphasize that reflection and reflective writing include other processes, such as exploration, analysis, and critique, and may not include assessment at all (but often do). Because assessment can be such a loaded term, particularly for students, I never use it when I am talking about reflective writing in my classroom, and while I acknowledge the important role

self-assessment often has in reflective processes, I have decided to use the terms reflection and reflective writing instead of self-assessment in this dissertation.

In this chapter, I discuss the theory related to the three primary topics I focus on in my research to provide context for the three data chapters of this dissertation. These topics are reflection/reflective writing, students' perceptions of audience, and teaching and learning academic discourse.

What is Reflection?

The idea of reflection has changed over the last four decades, moving from what Yancey (1998) describes as "A mode of *behavior* indicative of *growth of consciousness*" toward an intellectual process that recognizes the very value of learning itself (p. 4, italics in original). As Smith and Yancey (2000) note in the Preface to *Self-Assessment and Development in Writing*, "the history of self-assessment is closely linked to research on composing, and specifically to the kinds of judgments writers make in the process of composing" (p. ix). There is a wealth of scholarship on writing pedagogy, and within that scholarship the research on composing and composing processes is vast. Although concerns about reflection and reflective writing are woven in and out this research, I have limited my review to the most central studies examining reflection and writing pedagogy.

Schön's work on reflection (1983, 1987, 1991) is some of the most frequently cited in the composition research on the topic. Schön (1983) suggests that in reflecting on our own work we develop the ability to theorize our practices, to better understand our work, and develop the potential to improve it. Schön (1987) distinguishes between technical knowing and non-technical knowing, writing, "Technical rationality, the schools' prevailing epistemology of practice, treats professional competence as the

application of privileged knowledge to instrumental problems of practice" (p. xi). He further suggests that "professional education should be redesigned to combine the teaching of applied science with coaching in the artistry of reflection-in-action" (p. xii). Reflection-in-action, according to Schön, involves not only the individual thinking about what she is doing while she is doing it, but also the process of thinking back about what she has done, recognizing errors or unanticipated outcomes, and acting on this recognition, and changing her behavior to improve her proficiency. Schön's theories about reflective practices, and about reflection-in-action in particular, inform much of the scholarship on reflection in writing classrooms, and provide a foundation for my own research.

Yancey's (1998) volume on reflection, which is cited in nearly every article and book published after 1998 that so much as mentions reflection, is deeply informed by Schön's work. Yancey describes numerous students' reflective texts and processes, and defines three kinds reflection:

> *reflection-in-action*, the process of reviewing and projecting and revising, which takes place within a composing event, and the associated texts
>
> *constructive reflection*, the process of developing a cumulative, multi-selved, multi-voiced identity, which takes place between and among composing events, and the associated texts
>
> *reflection-in-presentation*, the process of articulating the relationships between and among the multiple variable of writing and the writer in a specific context for a specific audience, and the associated texts. (p. 13-14).

Although for Yancey these constructs are independent of one another, she notes that they can, and often do, work together. She suggests that the process of engaging in these kinds of reflection encourages students to bring identity formation into the classroom, to take responsibility for their writing and their texts, and to see texts and learning as negotiated (p. 199). Yancey's theories about reflection and identity formation inform my research and data analysis, but her conclusions are based on her interpretations and perceptions of students' reflections, while mine are based on students' own perceptions of their experiences with reflection.

Another of the most frequently cited works on reflection in writing classrooms is Flower's (1994) work, which posits that "reflection creates a distinctive kind of knowledge in the form of situated working theories" (p. 288). Like Yancey, she describes and analyzes the texts and processes of her own student writers to understand how reflection, and the awareness it can provide writers about their strengths and weaknesses, can lead to action. She writes

> Reflection, especially [these] observation-based reflections, is a way to name the world, and in naming to create new problems. But they are often good problems, and in the reflections themselves, we see writers are taking action as they reconstruct their own understandings and beginning to document, even celebrate, their own power to construct negotiated meanings. (p. 291)

For Flower, reflection is an integral part of the writing process, and allows students to situate themselves and their work in the greater world.

Tucker (2000) describes the reflective writing assignments he asks students in his writing pedagogy class to engage in, and discusses the ways in which they learn about

their teaching and writing through these assignments. He identifies three elements of reflection: First, "reflective writing is method more than rhetorical construction" (p. 33). That is, the process of reflective writing, and what students glean via that process, is more important than the ultimate product of the process. Second, "we reflect on things that interest us" (p. 34). Third, that "reflection is recursive" (p. 37). Using Elbow's (1986) argument that writing can be described as being somewhere between the binary poles of rhetoric and dialectic, where the former is designed to persuade an audience and the latter to make meaning, Tucker suggests that reflection is dialectical, in that it presents opportunities for students to view and review their writing, emphasizing process rather than product (p. 37). Tucker describes what he calls the "reflective turn," which is the moment when a writer, often unaware she is doing so, spontaneously begins to deliberate in her writing, moving away from summary and toward "true" reflection. For Tucker, the goal of reflective writing "is multi-dimensional knowledge, sometimes fraught with contradiction, with competing representations of the same phenomenon" (p. 52).

Reflection: The Early Years

The two articles I discuss in this section seem, in many ways, somewhat dated. In fact, the volume in which the Beaven's (1977) article was published contains a brief preface before each chapter; part of the preface to this particular article reads, "The unique contribution of this article is that it asks us to reconsider students' relation to the evaluation process and to share with students some of the responsibility for describing and measuring their own growth in writing" (p. 134). There appears to be a tone of astonishment here, at the prospect of expecting students to take responsibility for evaluating their own work. But these articles stand out in that they provide a clear sense

of the history of reflection, and of how far we have come in that reflection is now *de rigueur* in many writing classes.

In one of the earliest pieces on self-assessment in writing classrooms that I was able to find in the literature, Beaven (1977) describes and advocates a self-evaluation process for students that asks them to respond to a series of questions about their writing; such questions ask students how much time they spent on a paper, what they tried to improve or experiment with, what the strengths and weaknesses of the papers were, and what they will do to improve their next piece of writing. Finally, they have the option to assign themselves, and to justify, a grade for the paper. Although Beaven does quote from one student's response to the questions, she suggests that the significance of self-evaluation is evident in the questions that the writers are to respond to, rather than in the responses themselves. She notes that in addition to assisting students in taking responsibility for assessing their writing, self-evaluation also helps them to develop questions that instructors might address and assist them with, and to develop their personalities.

In what Yancey (1998) cites as "a single published article [that] links reflection and composing process," Pianko (1979) compares, via observation, interview, and reading the final product, the writing processes of a small group of "remedial" (I am troubled by this term, and have put it and its opposite, traditional, in quotation marks to indicate that these are not my terms, but terms reflective of the times) student writers to a small group of what she calls "traditional" writers (p. 4). She finds that generally, the texts created by the "traditional" writers were stronger, and notes some of the reasons for this, including that the "traditional" writers rescanned their work three times as often as

did the "remedial" writers. In addition, she observes that while both groups of writers paused while composing, the "traditional" writers spent their pauses looking back at the work they had already done (reflecting on what they had written), while the "remedial" writers spent their pauses looking around the classroom, or staring into space. In other words, the "traditional," or stronger, writers reflected upon their own work to make connections and to help them to decide what to write next. Pianko concludes that "remedial" students have an underdeveloped understanding of the cognitive processes of composing. She articulates the importance of working to teach students to become better reflective writers to improve the writing abilities and experiences of students at all levels. Although this study was small in scope—it is based on observation of a group of students composing a single essay—it is important in understanding early conceptions of the relationship between reflection and the composing process, as well as the genesis of the push toward including reflection and instruction on reflection in the writing classroom that took off in the 1980's and 1990's.

Reflection and Portfolios

In addition to using a variety of terms to refer to reflective processes, which I talked about briefly in the introduction, scholars and instructors also discuss numerous different, but often overlapping, genres and media for reflective writing; these include narrative or storytelling, journals, memoirs, essays, diaries, memos, and letters. Some of these quite clearly indicate that their purpose is to be reflective; others require explanation, modeling, and instruction. Although I do not spend a great deal of time in this review differentiating between different modes of reflection, I have devoted a section to portfolios. One might argue that the 1980's witnessed something of a "portfolio

movement" in composition research and pedagogy, and that this movement was key in integrating reflective writing more regularly and systematically into college writing classrooms. In addition, because portfolios by their very nature demand at least minimal reflection, I have opted to spend a portion of this review discussing them and their uses.

Although there is a great deal of literature on the advantages and disadvantages of portfolios for students, writing classes, and writing programs, I include here a few of the articles that directly address reflection in portfolios. The scholarship suggests that the adoption of portfolios in numerous writing classes and writing programs across the country has directly contributed to the increasing use of reflective practices in writing pedagogy, and I have included articles that demonstrate the ways portfolios have done this.

Mills-Courts & Amiran (1991) describe a college-wide writing portfolio program that was created in response to an assessment that determined that the institution's students were struggling to demonstrate metacognitive awareness. The committee that was responsible for addressing this negative assessment determined that writing portfolios offered an ideal opportunity for students to learn, practice, and demonstrate not only that they were learning, but also that they were aware of their own developing and changing learning processes. In addition to offering students a stronger sense of ownership of their work, the authors suggest that portfolios and the process of assembling them and working with faculty members to generate texts to include in the portfolios facilitates critical analysis, intellectual growth, and an opportunity to witness, understand, and articulate how that growth has happened.

Similarly, in a discussion of the experiences of teacher researchers who used portfolios in English and language arts classes, D'Aoust (1992) notes that one of the most important aspects of portfolios, in contrast to other types of assessment tools and techniques, is that they demand reflection on the part of the writer. Further, she writes, "Reflection is the act of pausing to see oneself as a writer. It creates awareness, a sort of self-consciousness about oneself as a writer. It enables a writer to celebrate her or his strengths as well as identify areas to be developed" (p. 43). By their very natures, portfolios demand that students assess and reflect on their work—both individual pieces as well as all of their writing for a particular course—as they collect and decide what to include, as they revise the pieces they have worked on in the past, and in some cases, as they write specifically reflective pieces to include in the portfolio to provide context for the reader. As D'Aoust explains, as some of the earliest examples of systematic, formal reflection, portfolios offer unique opportunities for students and instructors alike to make discoveries about writing.

Finally, Camp (1992) recognizes and advocates for the advantages of consistency in reflection that portfolios can offer, arguing that all too often in writing instruction, opportunities for reflection are erratic and interruptive, rather than being a central part of the writing process. Her solution to this is portfolios, which she claims offer the opportunity for sustained reflection, and may be designed so that reflection becomes the process through which the portfolios are created. She notes that portfolios, and especially the reflective activities associated with them, encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning and their writing, resulting in greater development in their writing.

Reflection and Academic Discourse

Although a number of writers acknowledge that reflective writing often takes forms that are not widely recognized as traditional academic writing, relatively few actually discuss the implications of this. Evans (2007) and Fulwiler (1989) however, both devote time to exploring the relationship between reflective writing and academic literacy. Evans (2007) describes academic writing as usually being expected to consist of polished pieces that are independent of writers' subjective experiences and that demonstrate the result of a cognitive process. He writes, "Dominant models of reflective practice still tend to focus on reflective writing as a form of 'end-product'; a document produced after the key event(s), in which the student has to move seamlessly out of the activity and into a sophisticated level of objective critical reflection" (p. 70). One of his goals was to identify whether or not students had a sense of "reflection-as-process," and how writing might be a part of that process, and he notes that students frequently struggle with "non-academic forms" of writing, and that rather than encouraging thoughtful, detailed responses, reflective journals often seemed to curb student responses because they reminded students of "the immanent scrutiny of their reflections as the point of assessment" (p. 71).

Evans does not clearly delineate between "academic" and "non-academic writing," but he does note that the former tends to be "functional, calculative, abstracted, and formal," while the latter tends to be sensory, intuitive, and often unfinished (p. 74). Evans worked with arts students and realized that their reflective journal writing, which was based on traditional forms of reflective writing (such as essays and diaries) was limiting the range of their reflections and their ability to achieve "deep learning." Such

conclusions led him to encourage "creative reflection," which is often unfinished and may include elements not traditionally considered writing, such as images and incomplete notes. He encourages instructors to avoid assessing reflective writing, which could assist students in becoming less inhibited in their writing, in turn helping them to develop more creative ways to understand their work and their learning. He concludes that for students who engaged in creative journal activities, "Words functioned not as a final product, but as part of a process of coming into knowledge, whereby the writer, through using the words creatively, is able more continually and confidently to inhabit the creative process" (p. 72).

While Evans focuses on the ways journals can enhance learning, Fulwiler (1989) focuses on how instructors' responses to students' journals can influence how students reflect and what they learn from such reflection, suggesting that

> For teachers interested in both the product and process of learning, [response] journals are the most comprehensive writing assignments available. At the same time, the informal, subjective, self-expressive nature of this rhetorical form makes it the most undervalued, misunderstood, and seldom used of the major modes of academic discourse, in virtually all subject areas of the curriculum. (p. 149)

Although he acknowledges that much of the writing that students do in journals runs "directly counter to traditional notions about appropriate academic discourse,"—in other words may be personal or emotional, uncertain, or unfocused—journals are invaluable in that they provide writers with opportunities play with writing, to try different rhetorical strategies and stances, and to learn about the different ways language works in different contexts (p. 171). He notes that for teachers, one of the most challenging parts of

incorporating journals into a curriculum is responding to them in ways that encourage reflection. He also notes that in many ways good journals depend on good responses, and encourages instructors to collect and respond to journals multiple times during the duration of a course, establishing a dialogue with students, and encouraging them to use the journals as a place to explore and experiment with their knowledge and their writing. Again, Fulwiler's piece is one of the few that directly addresses the differences between reflective writing and traditional academic writing, and I have found his discussion of the relationship and tensions between the two useful in my own teaching and research.

Teaching Reflection

Smith (2000) argues that self-assessment consists of both reflection and evaluation, and is both personal and public (though she acknowledges that even with a great deal of explanation, her own students tend to focus on the evaluative aspects of self-assessment). She cites Bruner (1986) and Perry (1970), noting that metacognition is not something all individuals know how to do, but is something we must learn to do. She writes,

> The effective teacher's goal, then, should be to set up the classroom so that learning becomes cyclical: Students act and learn, reflect on their actions, and then verbalize their learning in order to realize it—which leads to new action and new learning. Ultimately, students must learn to examine not only the products of their learning, but their own thinking processes, to engage in metacognitive activity. (127).

She suggests that self-assessment is as valuable for teachers as it is for students, in that it allows us to see what students learn, to address struggles students may be having, to

redesign assignments and responses to assignments, and to become generally more sensitive teachers. For students, self-assessment allows them to identify and understand what they have learned, "thus making it [learning] more fully their own" (p.137).

Kathpalia and Heah (2008) discuss reflective writing in portfolios in a writing class for undergraduate science majors, noting that "reflection helps students to combine experience and knowledge together to produce new learning, to apply theory to practice, encourage a critical reflection, gain insight into personal development, and manage their emotions throughout the learning process" (p. 301-302). They suggest the reflection is neither intuitive nor automatic, and that students need to be taught to develop reflective practices over time.

Hilgers, Hussey, & Stitt-Bergh (2000) briefly review the history of self-assessment, combining research in psychology and composition studies, and argue that although composition researchers and instructors widely recognize that self-assessment is valuable, and often use it in their classrooms, there is little research on the practice in writing scholarship, a gap I intend to address. Strategies they suggest for helping students to do effective self-assessment include ensuring they are taught and understand the criteria and standards of good writing, editing, and revision; building self-assessment into writing assignments; carefully constructing self-assessment prompts to generate responses that consider both cognitive growth and development of skills; and providing students ample training and practice in self-assessment. I have tried to incorporate a number of these strategies in my own classroom, and intend to reflect this in my study.

In case studies of preservice secondary teachers, Spalding and Wilson (2002) sought to determine what particular techniques they might use in their teaching to

encourage their students, most of whom were unfamiliar with or inexperienced in reflection, to engage in meaningful reflective practices. They concluded that one of the most important ways to encourage meaningful reflection and growth in reflection was to demystify the process, and developed a number of pedagogical strategies to do so. Although this article deals specifically with graduate students, and with students enrolled in a teacher education program, I have found Spalding and Wilson's conclusions useful in my own teaching of reflection, as well as in my research. Some of the techniques they advocate to encourage thoughtful reflective writing and thinking include spending classroom time on definitions, discussions, and models; using feedback to push students away from only personal reflection and toward critical reflection; designing reflective assignments that appeal to students' diverse learning styles and experiences; considering whether and how to grade reflective writing; considering whether or not to ask students to share their reflective pieces with their peers; and considering the type of medium in which students were to write reflective pieces. Ultimately, they concluded, based on the comments they received from the four students who were the focus of their study, that the most important part of reflection were the responses the instructors provided the students on their reflective pieces. Clear, thoughtful responses to student writing are of course, an important aspect of writing pedagogy; as such, the division between this section and the one that follows may seem somewhat false. In the end, however, I separated these sections to indicate the ways in which certain scholars are interested in studying the more focused topic of instructors' responses to reflective writing.

Reflection and Response

Although Somers' (1982) early and frequently cited article on how instructors respond to student writing, and how they should respond to student writing, does not directly discuss reflection or self-assessment, it does suggest that one of the goals of teacher response should be to encourage reflection and revision. In her study of how students choose which teacher comments to respond to and what their responses are, she identified the two main flaws in how instructors respond to student writing; first, instructors "appropriate the text," with comments that distract the student's attention from her own work and focus it on the instructor's comments. Second, instructor comments tend to be quite general, and are not tailored for the particular text to which they are responding. Somers writes

> Our comments need to offer students revision tasks of a different order of complexity and sophistication from the ones that they themselves identify, by forcing students back into the chaos, back to the point where they are shaping and restructuring their meaning. (p.154)

Somers seems to be acknowledging that substantive revision demands reflection, and suggesting that instructors need to use their comments to aid students in engaging in deeper reflection and self-assessment, in turn guiding them towards meaningful revision.

Beach (1989), who has written extensively about reflection, critiques the common forms of response that instructors engage in and teach, suggesting instead that more effective response may be both taught and practiced in small-group settings. He notes that response and reflection are interdependent, but that the four most prevalent methods instructors use to teach response are difficult for students to understand. It is worthwhile

to discuss these methods in some detail, as they are still frequently used in writing classrooms. One way instructors often model assessment and response to student writing is to tell students what they have done wrong, and how to remedy it. Unfortunately, this simply teaches students to mimic instructors, rather than teaching them to identify problems and come up with solutions on their own. Similarly, reader-based responses, such as comments like "as a reader, I was unsure what you were trying to say," are often mysterious to students who may lack the vocabulary and experience to understand how to address weaknesses in their writing; again, this approach does not instruct students how to identify problems on their own. Another common method of teaching assessment and response is to teach students critical thinking skills. As Beach notes, however, even astute critical thinkers may have difficulty applying global thinking to the individual and very specific problems in their own texts. Finally, Beach discusses large-group modeling of teaching assessment and reflection. He cites an earlier unpublished research report (Beach 1985) in which he notes that it is virtually impossible, in a classroom of students with diverse skills and experience, for instructors to determine how to teach and model assessment and reflection so that all students develop a clear understanding of what they are expected to be doing. Beach goes on to detail many of the specific steps he uses to demonstrate assessment and response to small groups of students, noting that over time, students show that they are able to appropriate such techniques to respond to, assess, and reflect upon their own writing and that of their peers.

O'Neill (1998) further connects reflection and instructor response, suggesting that typical models of reflection, in which instructors assign reflective writing and then respond to it, do not allow students to have as much power over their writing as does

engaging in a dialogue with students. O'Neill advocates that the exchange between student and teacher should include the student's written reflection and self-assessment, her primary text, the teacher's response to both, and an additional response from the student. She suggests that this approach allows for real conversations to develop between students and teachers, which helps students to feel more invested in both their coursework and their overall intellectual development. She details a number of strategies instructors might use to more fully incorporate reflection and self-assessment into their classes, and notes that in her own experiences, most students, though often resistant to reflection at first, come to recognize the ways in which it can enhance their learning experiences.

Finally, Watson (2000) prefers the term self-reflection to self-assessment, noting that for students, assessment almost always has restrictive, and more often than not potentially negative, connotations. Informed by Polyani's (1964, 1969) theories about knowledge and tacit learning, Watson describes his methods for engaging students in meaningful self-reflection, which focus on (but are not limited to) engaging them in written dialogue, in the form of letters that students and the instructor exchange throughout the semester. He suggests that this kind of exchange both allows him to model reflection, as he reflects on what students have written, and makes students feel more comfortable with him and with the process of self-reflection. Although he acknowledges that this is not an approach that works for all students, he notes that no approach does, but that the process of modeling and engaging in ongoing, active reflection with students provides an opportunity for instructors and students to make self-reflection meaningful and a life-long process.

Reflection and Power

Although numerous scholars and instructors note that reflective activities can encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and writing, Latta & Lauer (2000) directly address the relationship between reflection and power, in their consideration of self-assessment from postmodern and feminist perspectives. They argue that such theoretical perspectives can allow for greater individual agency, and in turn, can "further encourage the possibility for action, growth, and change" (p. 27). Taking the social constructionist perspective that students can take up a variety of subject positions, they call for instructors and researchers to consider what subject positions we are asking students to assess, what happens when the "self" that a student assesses is not the "self" we want, or are asking, the student to assess, and what we mean when we ask students to participate in self-assessments in the first place (p. 26). They write:

> Student self-assessment, therefore, could provide students with the opportunity to clarify for themselves the differences between their understandings of academic expectations and their own, an opportunity for students to genuinely engage with the academic institution on their own terms and offer them a possible forum for critique. (p. 31)

The authors make the following suggestions for instructors asking students to engage in self-assessment: we should emphasize that writing is rhetorically situated, and that all writers inhabit certain positions in their writing; we should do a better, more complete job of teaching students to do self-assessment and to recognize growth; and we should help students to realize that the positions they may want to inhabit in their writing may not be appropriate for, or accepted by, the institution for which they are writing. Finally, we

should carefully consider our reasons for asking for self-assessment at all, and we must understand that some students will find the process uncomfortable or intrusive, particularly if assessments are being evaluated. In short, they indicate that instructors need to be as reflective as we are asking our students to be.

In one of the relatively few more recent classroom studies, Anson (2000) details how he tried to understand how his students' reflections on their in-process writing could help him to understand how they might be developing writing proficiency. Using Halliday's (1973) functional approach to language as a theoretical framework, Anson developed categories for the kinds of comments students made on tape about their writing. His findings suggest that strong writers demonstrate a good sense of control over their processes and texts, while weaker writers tend to defer to authority, and express a great deal of uncertainty and concern over what might be "right" and what might be "wrong" in their writing. Based on his study, Anson concludes that instructors can benefit all student writers, but especially struggling ones, by offering open-ended assignments, helping them to see their work as process rather than product, offering multiple opportunities for feedback, and by responding to them and their writing in student-centered ways.

Ross (2014) suggests that students are always aware of their audience when they are performing high-stakes reflection (she considers all reflection that is compulsory and/or assessed as being high-stakes), and that they thus orient their reflections toward assessment, teacher expectations and desires, or a "general 'Other'" (p. 219). She posits that such awareness means students are never authentic in their assessments, and but that this lack of authenticity is problematic only in that educators expect it in the first place.

She suggests that teachers need to encourage students to "be more critical and creative about their relation to audience" (p. 229), and that asking students to be authentic is in fact asking them to perform, or to respond to the entities in power that are requiring reflection.

The research surrounding reflection in First-Year Writing classrooms is vast, but very little of it involves qualitative studies, or showcases student voices. This study intends to add to the body of research on the value of reflective writing, particularly in First-Year Writing classes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A primary goal of my research study is to contribute to what scholars know about students' perceptions of reflective writing, and about how such writing can be used in first-year composition classrooms. As I have noted in previous chapters, the value of reflective practice is almost taken for granted, particularly in composition pedagogy; in fact, Jung (2011) describes it as having "become one of the field's sacred pieties" (p. 628). Although scholarship in composition studies has amply demonstrated the value of reflective writing from the perspective of teachers (see, for example, Camp, 1992; Emmons, 2003; Flower, 1994; O'Neill, 1998; Pianko, 1979; Ross, 2014; Yancey, 1998), there is comparatively little information about how students feel about not only the process of reflection, but also the results of their reflective practices.

In this study, my aim was not to generalize about what students learn from reflection, or how they experience the practice. Instead, I describe a specific set of student reflections, and student comments about those reflections, which took place in a specific time and place in response to specific assignments in the context of a particular first-year composition program. I wanted to understand what my students were taking away from these practices that is consistent with what theory suggests. To this end, I explore several aspects of how students perceive both the process and outcome of reflective writing, the possibilities made available to teachers of writing and their students, and some of the challenges of using reflective writing as a pedagogical technique.

Research Context

The Research Site

My research was conducted at a large and growing state university in the Southwest that is located near an urban metroplex with a population of over six million people. The university, which I call Southwest State, is a comprehensive public university with increasing research expectations of faculty. Southwest State is the flagship campus in a system that also includes two additional, smaller campuses in nearby cities. At the time I conducted my study, the total student population of Southwest State was about 36,000 students, and the administration had undertaken an aggressive campaign to increase that population to 45,000 in the next five years, while at the same time raising admissions standards. In 2012, 64% of students who applied to the university were admitted, and the average standardized test scores, according to the university web site, were 24 for the composite ACT and 1105 for the SAT. Seventy-nine percent of enrolled students were considered undergraduates, and the total number of freshmen who enrolled in the fall semester of 2012 was 4451; 78% of students enroll full time, and the school has a 77% first-year retention rate. In 2012, approximately 24% of enrolled undergraduates were Hispanic/Latino; 14% percent were African-American, 9% percent were Asian, 1.5% were American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and less than 1% were classified as "unknown or other". The student/faculty ratio at Southwest State is 23:1, and the university boasts ten programs ranked in the top 100 of colleges and universities in the United States by *US News and World Report*. In particular, Southwest State has well-known and highly regarded music and design departments that attract students from all over the United States. In addition, athletics are an important part of campus culture,

and football enjoys special status on campus; Southwest State competes at the Division I level.

The Course and Assignments

The class in which I conducted my research is called College Writing II. College Writing II is a general education class that follows College Writing I, both of which are housed in the English Department[1] at Southwest State. These courses are part of the university's "core curriculum," which are courses that fulfill mandates about required courses that were created by the state legislature in 1997. All students who graduate from Southwest State must fulfill the core curriculum requirements.

College Writing I and II are first-year composition classes that are among six classes students may choose from to fulfill the English Composition and Rhetoric core curriculum requirement. That is, students must take two writing classes, and have a total of twelve classes from which to choose the two they will take. These courses are usually taken in sequence, and are required of all students, except those who have taken an equivalent course in high school, at a community college, at another college or university, or have tested out of the first-semester class via advanced placement or international baccalaureate exam. Students must earn a grade of C or better in both College Writing I and II to be considered as having successfully completed them; students with D or F grades must retake the class to graduate. Both classes emphasize writing strategies and assignments based on ancient rhetorical practices, and the same primary textbook, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee, is

[1] The "location" of First-Year Writing Programs in colleges and universities varies dramatically. Some fall under the auspices of English Departments, while others are housed in Rhetoric Departments. According to the current director of Southwest State's First-Year writing program, these programs are increasingly being pulled out of English and Rhetoric departments. In such cases, it is not uncommon for the college or university to hire an individual with a background in business or administration to direct the programs, and an assistant director who has expertise in writing program administration.

used in both courses. College Writing I and II are capped at 25 students, a number the English Department is adamant about not increasing. The number of sections of College Writing I and II varies from semester to semester, depending on enrollment. In the fall semester of 2012, which is the semester during which I collected most of my data for this dissertation, 91 sections of College Writing I and 39 sections of College Writing II were offered.

All sections of College Writing I and II follow the same curriculum, which is designed by the Director of Freshman Writing. All instructors are required to participate in an orientation program before each fall semester begins, are required to use the same primary textbook, and are also required to choose one secondary text from a list of approved texts. I interviewed the Director of Freshman Writing to learn more about the rationale behind this curriculum, and to more fully contextualize College Writing II for this section of my project. I reference this interview later in the chapter. In general, the philosophy and mission for the First-Year Composition Program, as stated on the Program's web site, emphasize investigation and inquiry through writing. Part of the mission statement reads as follows:

> We believe that each writer has a stake in shaping the world through writing. For this reason, our courses at [Southwest State] prepare students to intervene rhetorically in a variety of communities, including both academic and nonacademic contexts. . . . Overall, we invite students to join with us in questioning writing: this process of questioning includes exploring new forms and contexts for writing that are emerging constantly around us. By the time students have completed the courses in the Introductory Writing sequence, they will be

> prepared to respond appropriately to the demands of writing they encounter as they move into new settings both in the university and beyond. (Citation removed for purposes of anonymity)

In describing in some detail the assignments for College Writing I and II, I demonstrate how the goals of the specific assignments align with the goals for the First-Year Composition Program in general. I have also included examples of the assignment prompts and associated rubrics that I used in my classes in Appendix A.

In College Writing I and II, students were[2] required to complete a series of short essays, called *Progymnasmata*, based on the primary textbook for the course. The *Progymnasmata*, or PG exercises, are modeled on ancient rhetorical practices and activities, and are designed to give students experience with writing in various genres. The assignments allowed writers to practice and experiment with the rhetorical strategies they read about in the textbook and that we discussed and modeled in class. Students in both College Writing I and II were asked to choose a topic that interested them early on in the course (by the third week in my sections), and each PG exercise provided them the opportunity to write about that topic from various perspectives. For example, in College Writing II, students were required to complete three PG exercises, titled Encomium/Invective, Confirmation/Refutation, and Introduction of Law. The first assignment asked students to write a declaration of praise and a declaration of blame against a particular person or event that has had a significant effect on or role in the topic they have chosen to research. Next, students were asked to compose a confirmation and a refutation that focused on arguments or assertions that were current and relevant to their

[2] I am describing these assignments in past tense because as of August, 2015, the course director and curriculum have changed. I discuss these changes in detail in Chapter Seven.

chosen topic. Finally, students attacked or defended a specific law that was relevant to their topic; in doing so, they were expected to use different kinds of outside resources to support their arguments. These varied rhetorical techniques encouraged students to carefully analyze rhetorical situations, to address a variety of audiences and contexts, and to create carefully considered persuasive texts. The rhetorical strategies that we focus on in College Writing II were more complex than those of College Writing I, and are, according to the First-Year Writing Program web site, "designed to anticipate students' need for a flexible framework of academic writing." Essentially, in this course we focused on writing for a very clearly defined audience, and on using appropriate "academic" language and style. All assignments also required that students be able to support their arguments with thorough research.

In both College Writing I and II, students were encouraged to incorporate the writing they did for the PG exercises into their final projects. In College Writing II, the final project (called the Research-based Action Essay) had three components: a 2-3 page audience profile, an 8-10 page thesis-driven research paper, and a 2-3 page reflective analysis. The topics covered in the final projects should have been at least closely related to the topics students chose early in the semester and had been writing about all along (though inevitably there were a few students who frantically requested to change their topics late in the semester).

Although the PG exercises did not have reflective writing formally built into the assignments like the final project did, a series of rubrics were created by the Director of Freshman Writing for instructors to use in evaluating PG exercises; these rubrics included a section specifically devoted to reflective analysis (see Appendix A for these rubrics). I

used these rubrics to inform both assignment prompts and the questions I wrote for students to consider and respond to in their reflective essays. Thus, I made sure students had access to these rubrics, we discussed them in class, and I encouraged students to consult the rubrics when they were working on their assignments.

My Classroom

Although all First-Year Composition instructors were provided with a sample syllabus, guidelines to follow in terms of topics to cover, and were expected to address certain chapters of the course textbook, as well as a secondary text that we choose from a list of approved non-fiction books, we were also permitted a certain amount of freedom in terms of what happens in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. In my own classroom I rarely lecture, aim to be flexible enough with the schedule to be able to accommodate class needs as they arise, and require a great deal of discussion and both formal (as in read and responded to, if not always evaluated by, me) and informal writing.

In College Writing II, I begin each semester with a review of key concepts from the previous semester course. Because not all students have taken the previous course at Southwest State, I try to make this review thorough, and also rely on students who have taken the first-semester course to "help" me with the review. By expecting, and therefore asking, students to become involved in this review, I make it clear by the second day of the semester that the class is discussion based, and that I will require students to participate frequently and to work to teach and learn from one another.

One of the biggest difficulties that students have repeatedly told me they encounter in the class is the terminology. Some of the key terms that we use in this class are from the textbook and include words like *progymnasmata*, encomium, invective, stasis, confirmation, enthymeme, induction, and deduction. Most of these terms are new

to students, and many students are challenged by them, finding them difficult to pronounce and understand. I've had numerous students tell me that although they start the reading assignments from the textbook, they often don't complete them because the extensive vocabulary from ancient rhetoric frustrates them. This is especially true of English Language Learners, who often describe themselves as feeling demoralized by the textbook.

When I spoke with the director of the writing program about his choice of textbook and the curriculum for this sequence of classes, he explained to me that part of his goal was to create a more equal playing field for all students. He also told me that because first-year students at Southwest State show vast variation in their prior educational experiences and preparedness for college, his choice of the course curriculum in general and the textbook in particular were designed to "Defamiliarize the entire scene of composition so that we all start with language that's a little bit different than what we're used to" (Interview). In turn, it is my responsibility to help students feel confident with this unfamiliar language, and to encourage them that through the practice of studying it and using the techniques it describes in their writing, they can gain mastery of it and the associated concepts.

One of the primary goals of College Writing II, according to the course description, is to "provid[e] students with the opportunity to study, experience, and practice the basic rhetorical elements of academic writing, including thesis statements, claims, support, and counterargument." With this in mind, early on in the semester I ask students to share their planned majors or areas of interest with the class. As we read and talk about various non-fiction texts, citation styles, and rhetorical strategies, I try to

reference students' different fields of study to make the material not only clearly relevant to them, but also to illustrate how there are different expectations of writers in different academic disciplines. For example, instead of requiring all students to use MLA citation style, I ask them to use the style they are required to use in their major fields. In addition, I also try to bring in outside readings that reflect as many of these different majors as possible.

As noted above, the assignments that all instructors were required to give consisted of three short essays (the *progymnasmata* described earlier), a detailed audience analysis, a researched essay, and a reflective analysis. We were allowed to determine the format of these assignments, but were required to aim for about 7500 written words for the semester. In addition to the assignments listed above, I required an annotated bibliography of at least ten scholarly sources, as well as two revision exercises that varied in length depending on what and how each student chose to revise. I have found that in comparison to other sections, I required a somewhat longer researched essay (8-10 pages). My primary reasons for doing so were first, because a longer paper requires students to develop arguments that are more detailed and nuanced, and forces them away from the five-paragraph structure that they often cling to even after taking the first-semester writing course. Second, I find that if students can successfully write a paper of this length in my class, they are less intimidated by longer papers they will likely be assigned as they continue their studies.

Because the number of required assignments is significant given the time constraints of a semester, I found it challenging to incorporate systematic revision into the class. I built peer workshops into the audience analysis and research essay

assignments, and asked students to complete shorter revision exercises of the first and third *progymnasmata* assignments. In addition, I encouraged all students to revise one of these PG assignments at least once before the end of the semester to be reevaluated. Finally, I allowed any student who expressed dissatisfaction with a paper (or grade), to revise any assignment. The only conditions of this were that the student must meet with me to discuss the paper and his or her specific plans for revision. In addition, because the *progymnasmata* assignments were designed to be incorporated into the research essay, many students ended up using significant portions, if not all, of these shorter essays in the final paper, which is another way I was able to include a bit more revision in a class that often feels tightly packed.

When I comment on and evaluate students' papers, I do so extensively, often line by line, and also with end comments. I primarily ask questions, and also try to respond as a reader (not just an evaluator), and describe as clearly as I can the strengths and weaknesses I find in the paper. I always make specific suggestions about revision, even though relatively few students each semester actually take the time to revise their work (outside of the required revision exercises I assign). In addition, I tried to address how the student might incorporate the essay, either as is or with revision, into the final research paper. If an essay demonstrates that a student is really struggling with certain aspects of his or her writing, such as grammar, sentence structure, organization, etc., I will invite him or her to meet with me one-on-one, or with the campus Writing Lab, to get some additional, personalized assistance with his or her writing.

In terms of day-to-day classroom practice, I try to incorporate writing, discussion, and a brief lecture or activity that focuses on "skills" (such as grammar, citation style,

writing introductions and conclusions, paragraph structure, to name a few) into each class session. Reading assignments consist of chapters from the textbook, sections of whichever non-fiction text I have chosen from the list of secondary texts for that semester (for the semester I collected the data I am discussing here, I had chosen *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World* by Robert Neuwirth), and various essays and short fiction pieces that I change frequently.

Following is a specific example from my lesson plans for a class that took place early in the semester during which I collected my research for this dissertation: First, I asked students to write down one to three topics they might be interested in writing about for the whole semester, and to briefly describe why what they had chosen was interesting to them. I then gave them a handout on thesis statements and talked to them about the importance of thesis statements and strategies for writing thesis statements for 10-15 minutes. Next, I asked them to go back to their topics list and draft a few thesis statements on the topics they had chosen. I asked a few students to share their thesis statements, and we engaged in class discussion about them. We spent the remainder of the period discussing the secondary non-fiction text I had assigned; in particular, we talked about whether or not they had enjoyed what they had read so far (the response was a definitive no), why they did not like it, and how the author was positioning himself in the book. In addition, we discussed some of the author's rhetorical strategies, with a particular emphasis on introductions, thesis statements, and topic sentences. I ended the class by reminding the students about the reading assignment for the next class and telling them we would more fully discuss how the author used thesis statements in his writing. I then collected their writing. Before the next class period, I commented on any

problems I saw in terms of the feasibility of writing a research paper on the topic(s) they had chosen, and commented on the thesis statements; I returned those papers the next time the class met. Although I do not collect and comment on every writing activity I ask students to do in class, I do encourage them to keep what they write, and I aim to connect the writing tasks very specifically to assignments they are required to turn in and to the reading we do for class. I also try to include some writing in most class periods.

Background for Study

As I indicated in my Introduction, when I began teaching at Southwest State, I found that for the first time in my teaching career, I was required to incorporate reflective writing into the class. Although I had previously toyed with reflective writing in composition and literature courses I had taught at other institutions, I had generally found the results to be disappointing, and I felt insecure about my own abilities to teach reflection. At the same time, my experiences teaching, directing a writing center, and taking Education classes had only confirmed the nagging feeling in the back of my mind that reflection could be an important part of the writing process. At Southwest State, I was introduced to guidelines, in the form of rubrics, that I believed would assist me in determining how to incorporate what I expected to be meaningful, regular reflection into my classes.

According to the English Department's official statement of the course goals and outcomes at the time I conducted my research, reflection was a key goal of the course:

> 1.8. Students will demonstrate understanding of their own rhetorical choices and writing habits
>
> 1.8.1. Students will reflect critically on how they invent, arrange, and style the texts they produce

1.8.2. Students will argue persuasively for the relevance and effectiveness of their own rhetorical choices

1.8.3. Students will identify their rhetorical choices as evidence of ethical decision making

1.8.4. Students will explain the issues/problems most relevant to their identified audiences and will provide evidence to support their critical thinking about the audience and context for their writing.[3] (Citation removed for purposes of anonymity)

In an attempt to fulfill these goals and outcomes, on days that students turned in progymnasmata exercises, I asked them to write reflective essays in class. As indicated above, I provide a set of questions (see Appendix D) for these essays that were based on the rubrics designed by the director of the writing program, and while I commented on the essays and returned them to students with my comments, I did not evaluate them. I try to put my comments in the form of a conversation, which usually involves asking students more questions about what they have written and encouraging them to provide me with more detail about their own thoughts on their work and their writing process.

Over the four years I have been teaching College Writing II, I have worked each semester to incorporate more consistent reflection and reflective practices into daily class sessions. Even students who have been through the first semester class find the practice of reflection awkward at first, in part, I suspect, because different instructors have different formats and requirements for reflective writing. Students can be resistant to analyzing how they know what they know, and why they've written what they've written. As I watch them write their reflective essays, especially the first one I assign, I see a great

[3] See Appendix B for the full Outcomes document.

deal of hesitation, crossing out of what they've written, and I get a lot of questions about what I "want" students to write, or what I mean by certain questions I ask. In an attempt to help students feel more confident, I try to encourage reflective thinking and language in our discussions of our reading and writing, and I try to reference their reflective writing in these discussions. I am constantly asking students to try to explain *why* they think they way they do, to tell us what informs their ideas, and to describe *how* they know what they know. Over time, the reflective writing that they do seems to come more easily to them, demonstrates more insight about their processes and pieces, and their conversations in class begin to include reflective language without my prompting. I more fully discuss the evidence I have of some of both the hesitancy and progression I see in students' reflective practices in the following chapters of this project.

Research Participants

I briefly describe my fall 2012 College Writing II sections to provide some context about student characteristics and rates of success in the classes in which I conducted my study. Although students at Southwest State are encouraged to complete the College Writing I and II sequence of courses during their freshman year, College Writing II tends to consist of a significant number of upper class students; of the 49 students who enrolled in my two College Writing II classes in 2012, 20 were classified as freshmen, 18 as sophomores, eight as juniors, and three as seniors. Five of the students in these two sections would be considered "non-traditional" students. Because students must earn a C or better in the class to be considered as having successfully completed it, I included in this study only those students who earned final grades of A, B, or C (students who earn D or F grades usually do so because they have stopped attending class and/or

have not turned in multiple assignments. The English Department has a very strict attendance policy, and every semester a few students fail the class due to absenteeism). In fact, the eight students I discuss in this study were all A and B students. The C students I contacted either declined to be interviewed, or did not respond to my emails.

Of the 49 students who enrolled in my two College Writing II classes in fall 2012, 40 successfully completed the class with a grade of C or better. Two students earned D's, six earned F's, and one withdrew from the class. This grade distribution generally represents the classes I teach, though one of the sections I taught in fall 2012 met at 8 a.m. three days a week, and I find that grades are generally lower and there are more withdrawals and F's in early morning sections. The overall final grade distribution average for the early morning section was 2.37; for the afternoon section it was 2.67. Most of the students who failed the class did so because they had missed more classes than the English Department's attendance policy permits, and had not turned in a number of assignments. One student, in addition to having accrued excessive absences and missing work, plagiarized the final research paper.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Because I was conducting my study at Southwest State but wrote this dissertation as a student at the University of Iowa, I was required to receive Institutional Review Board approval from both institutions. After consulting with the Institutional Review Boards of both Southwest State and the University of Iowa, I applied for full IRB approval from Southwest State in July 2012 using the University of Iowa IRB application form. In early August I received approval from Southwest State to conduct my study between August 16, 2012 and August 16, 2013, and immediately submitted records of

this approval to the University of Iowa. The University of Iowa IRB had told me that instead of requiring full approval from both institutions, once I had full approval from Southwest State to conduct the study, I could request an Authorization Agreement from the University of Iowa. This agreement would accept Southwest State's IRB as the designated IRB for the project. I requested this agreement in August, and received approval from the University of Iowa in early December 2012. To ensure I could use the artifacts from the classes I taught in fall 2012 and contact students regarding focal interviews, I immediately distributed consent forms to all students in both sections of College Writing II that I was teaching.

A Timeline of Data Collection and Analysis

My data set consisted of seven components: The First-Year Writing Program Philosophy and Mission Statement, the College Writing II Course Description, essays written by students in the two College Writing II classes I taught in the fall semester of 2012, my lesson plans from that semester, field notes I wrote during the semester, my comments on student essays, and recorded interviews with focal students conducted after the conclusion of the semester. Because I was teaching at the same time that I was conducting my research, my data collection and analysis processes were necessarily recursive. That is, I read, responded to, and in some cases evaluated my students' reflective writings in a timely fashion to get the assignments back to students. In short, because the realities of teaching and conducting research at the same time meant that my data collection and analysis was at times somewhat messy, I address how I managed the data and accounted for the messiness of the collection and analysis. I give an overview of

the process, followed by a more detailed description of each data component in the next section.

After I had read, commented on, and evaluated student essays, I scanned the essays, rubrics that I commented on and gave to students, and reflective essays. I organized scanned essays by assignment type and class, in password protected files on my home computer. To account for and keep track of data, data analysis, and work I did in my capacity as an instructor, I kept detailed field journals that tracked student assignments, classroom discussion and writing activities, and my comments on student assignments. I also used these journals to track student writings that I wanted to revisit in the context of this research project.

First, I read through all of the reflective essays my students wrote. Because I did not yet know who would ultimately agree to participate in the study, I tried to cast a wide net. As I read through these essays, I made researcher field notes about themes related to my research questions that seemed to be emerging. I also made notes about which students had fully completed assignments, as well as about the relative depth and complexity of their reflective responses.

On the last day of class I gave consent forms to all students who were present; 30 students signed consent forms agreeing to participate in and be interviewed for my study. I then revisited the reflective essays and my field notes, based on which students had signed consent forms, again looking for emerging patterns that spoke to my research questions. I used these patterns to help me to decide which students I wanted to contact for interviews.

Of the 30 students who had agreed to be interviewed, I selected ten students (two of these ten students later requested to be withdrawn from the study. One told me that he was not convinced he would remain anonymous, and that he was embarrassed about his grade in the class. The other said he had changed his mind) to interview. There were three primary factors that led me to choose these particular students. First, when I reviewed the field journals I had recorded when I was organizing my data, I found that notes about certain students were especially relevant to my research questions. I made a list of these particular students (there were 17 students on this initial list). Second, because I could not conduct interviews until the semester during which I collected my data was over, some students were no longer available and/or willing to meet for interviews. Finally, the ten students I did choose to interview to me characterized both the variety and "types" of students I work with at Southwest State. I felt that they represented a range of experiences, ages, interests, writing abilities, and socio-cultural backgrounds.

I conducted 30-45 minute semi-structured interviews with those ten students between February and June, 2013 (see Appendix C for interview questions). Once I had transcribed all ten interviews, I began coding the transcripts for themes using my research questions as a guide. I began by using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to identify and label conceptually related themes. Themes about audience and authority seemed especially prevalent. I made another pass through both the reflective essays and interview transcripts, and used axial coding to relate conceptual categories to subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I discuss these coding procedures in more detail in Chapter Four.

Types of Data

All of the assignments I developed for my courses were based on two documents that are foundational to the course. These documents, a Philosophy and Mission statement and the College Writing II Course description, inform how the course is structured, what assignments we give, and how instructors assess student work. Because these documents were instrumental to how I designed my classes, and in turn to the work students did for the class, I begin my data analysis with a close examination of the language of these documents.

Student artifacts consisted of formal (graded) and informal (not graded) writing assignments that all students were required to complete for the class: The three PG exercises I describe above (Encomium/Invective, Confirmation/Refutation, and Introduction of Law) and reflective essays students wrote in class about those exercises, and research papers and reflective essays about the research papers that students wrote at home.

Students were required to conduct some sort of reflective writing activity associated with every major writing assignment they had for College Writing II. There are two types of reflective writing I asked my students to do: first, "informal" essays that I responded to, but did not grade, which were based on the formal PG assignments, and second, a longer, more formal essay that students wrote at the end of the semester that I both responded to and evaluated.

My approach to assigning the "informal" reflective writing exercises involved asking students to respond, in writing, to a series of questions I created that were based

on the rubric that was given to me to use in assessing the assignments. Examples of the questions I asked students to respond to include:[4]

• Describe what you have helped your audience to understand about the topic you are writing about.

• What was your purpose in writing about the topic you chose?

• Explain what rhetorical strategies you used in your paper? Where did you use them (cite examples), and why did you use them?

• Describe the audience values you targeted in your writing?

• Describe how you arranged and organized your essay, and why you arranged and organized it as you did.

• If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you focus on revising, adding, or changing?

On the day students turned in their essays, they spent time in class writing responses to questions I posted on the overhead computer projector in class. There are four reasons I ask students to complete the majority of these activities in class. First, I want them to have some distance from the assignment itself, and I want to ensure that they complete the reflective assignment *after* they have written the assignment they are to be reflecting upon (I have actually had students write and turn in reflections based on essays they haven't turned in to me. In addition, I have also had students write reflective essays before they have written the assignment the reflection is supposed to be based on. In spite of these examples, which have admittedly been few, I do think that asking students to write their reflections in class generally prevents such incidents). Second,

[4] For the full sets of questions I asked students to respond to in each reflective essay they wrote, see Appendix D.

students often find themselves finishing assignments immediately before class begins, and I do not want the reflective essays to be overlooked because students are focusing on completing what they consider to be the "primary" assignment. Third, students often have questions for me about the reflective assignments; for example, they want to know how long they should be, or they need something clarified and/or explained. Finally, asking students to complete the reflective pieces in class gives them an opportunity to practice writing under time constraints. Although I allow students as much time as they need to complete their writing, the fact that the class ends at a certain time limits the amount of time they have. These "informal" reflective essays that students write in class are one important source of data I used for this study.

In addition, I also used the final, more "formal" reflective writing assignment required for the class (please find a copy of the assignment in Appendix A). This is a longer reflective essay that students are required to turn in after they have submitted the first two parts of the formal research paper project (an audience analysis and the research paper itself). This essay is graded, and although it is relatively short (two to three pages), it is weighted equally to the much longer research paper and the audience analysis[5].

Additional sources of data included my written responses to students' essays and reflections, my own class notes and class plans, and my field notes. I try to take class notes during and at the end of each class period, and generally include information about what was successful, what did not work, what topics students struggled with, and what

[5] Instructors were not given information about how we should weight the three components (the Audience Analysis, the Research-based Action Essay, and the Reflective Analysis) of the final project for College Writing II. I chose to weight them equally to emphasize to students that although they were separate assignments, they were equally important. Some students argued that because the Research-based Action Essay is longer (8-10 pages), it should be worth a greater percentage of the final grade for the class. My position was that it was not about length, but about the intellectual demands of the assignment, and that in my experience, both the audience analysis and the reflective analysis were substantially more difficult for most students to write.

questions they had. My class plans are notes I draft before class, and include the questions I ask students to consider when they are writing their reflective pieces in class. Field notes include notes I wrote while students were writing their reflections and while I was reading and/or evaluating the reflections, as well as notes I took during interviews. Finally, after the semester was over, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with students I had selected based on themes that had appeared to be emerging from their reflective essays and my field notes.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive Coding

Glesne (1999) writes that "Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to others stories" (p. 130). For organizational and analytical purposes, I relied on descriptive coding to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the patterns, and I found myself returning to the data frequently; indeed, Saldaña (2009) notes that

> [C]oding is a cyclical act. Rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted. The second cycle (and possibly the third and fourth, and so on) of recording further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory. (p. 8)

As I read and reread my data I discovered patterns, and I began to develop categories and analyze the connections between these patterns. In the table below I have indicated how I analyzed the data I collected as it relates to my research questions.

Table 3.1: Data Analysis in the Context of Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Source	Data Analysis
1) What identity does Southwest State intend to take up via its First-year Writing Program? What roles for students are created by this identity? In what ways does Southwest State's First-Year Composition Program work to include or exclude students from its mission of helping students to become better writers?	Philosophy and Mission statement College Writing II course description Researcher Field Notes	Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)
2) In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their	Reflective Essays written in class Researcher Field Notes	Descriptive Coding

Table 3.1—continued

understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time? 3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing?		
2) In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time? 3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing?	Reflective Essay, final Researcher Field Notes	Descriptive Coding
2) In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time? 3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing? 5) What evidence is available to show how students learn to do reflective writing?	My Comments on Reflective Essays Researcher Field Notes	Descriptive Coding
2) In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time?	Class Notes and Plans Researcher Field Notes	Descriptive Coding

Table 3.1--continued

3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing? 5) What evidence is available to show how students learn to do reflective writing?		
4) How do students characterize reflective writing they do in first-year composition in relation to the academic writing they also do in first-year composition?	Researcher Field Notes	Descriptive Coding
2) In what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing demonstrate this literacy? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time? 3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing? 5) What evidence is available to show how students learn to do reflective writing?	Director of Composition Interview Transcript Researcher Field Notes	Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)
3) What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing? 4) How do students characterize reflective writing they do in first-year composition in relation to the academic writing they also do in first-year composition? 5) What evidence is available to show how students learn to do reflective writing?	Student Interview Transcripts Researcher Field Notes	Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)

Discourse Analysis

In analyzing students' spoken (interviews) and written data (expository essays and reflective essays), I was interested in how they were using language to adopt various socially situated identities (Gee, 2014). As Gee (2014) notes, we use language to say, do, and be things, and we do so "at different times and places for different purposes" (p. 3). Because my interest was in understanding students' reflective writing as related to their social relationships and identities, Gee's (2005, 2014) model of Discourse Analysis was most appropriate for analyzing the data I collected, and it encouraged me to consider how I might better help students to, in Gee's words, "liberate [their] sense of power as language users and producers" (2014, p. 220). In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I elaborate on how I used discourse analysis to analyze the data I collected.

The Teacher-Researcher Role

Because I conducted this study in my own classroom, it is crucial that I considered my own role in this research, as well as the subjectivities I bring into the classroom. As an adjunct instructor, I occupy a somewhat unusual position in the department where I work at Southwest State. The majority of the College Writing I and II instructors are graduate students and lecturers (lecturers are full-time, non-tenure track instructors who have three or five year contracts, depending on their years of teaching experience). The number of adjunct instructors teaching College Writing I and II fluctuates from semester to semester, and adjuncts often receive teaching appointments days (and sometimes hours) before the semester starts. As deeply committed to my students and to teaching as I am, there are times when I feel somewhat detached from both the department and the program I work for because of my status in that my teaching load can vary so much and change at the last minute. At the same time, I am aware that

my continued employment depends on student evaluations, my performance in the classroom as observed by one of my superiors,[6] and strong class enrollments.

As I noted earlier, the subject of College Writing I and II at Southwest State, ancient rhetoric, is initially deeply alienating to most students. The textbook can be difficult to read, and to many students, the assignments seem unfamiliar in both structure and purpose. At times, I struggle with the tension I feel between needing to represent the department and maintaining my identity as a writing instructor in the classroom. I am also aware that in asking students to respond to fairly specific questions in their reflective writing, I am, to some extent, both guiding and limiting their responses. At the same time, because I am required to assess, albeit to varying degrees, the reflections my students produce, I feel it is necessary to provide them some guidelines regarding what is expected of them. My field notes frequently reflect these ongoing tensions.

In addition to my feelings about my roles in the classroom and the department at large, I kept detailed field notes that include my own reflections on the tensions I feel as an instructor in a department where I at times feel distanced from the writing community, and at philosophic odds with the teaching approach. In these notes I tried to document particular students' performances on assignments, students' questions and comments about assignments, as well as my own challenges and successes with both lessons and assignments, and I referred frequently to these notes when I was conducting my data analysis.

[6] I have only been observed once, during my very first semester, since I began teaching at Southwest State.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES

When I began the research for this dissertation, I had no intention of discussing either the College Writing II Course Description or the Philosophy and Mission statement for the First-Year Composition Program. As I begin interviewing students, and analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, however, I found that a common theme that was emerging had to do with the institutional identity of Southwest State. Students talked about writing for my "bosses," and for "the English Department." At the time of the interviews, I had not thought to pursue these responses in much detail, but in the process of analyzing the data I collected, I realized I needed to better understand two things: first, the foundations of the course in which I was collecting my data; second, how both I and my students were constructed by the course, the English Department, and the university at large.

In this chapter, I use Gee's (2014) discourse analysis as a framework through which to analyze two documents that are integral to the university's First-Year Composition Program: The Philosophy and Mission Statement and the Course Description for College Writing II. As my analysis will suggest, the language of these documents works to construct an identity for a program that consists of a community of insiders from which the very students who are supposed to benefit from the class are ultimately excluded.

Context

When I began teaching at Southwest State in 2011, I had to quickly familiarize myself with a curriculum that was new to me. One of the components of this curriculum that both intrigued and concerned me was the emphasis on reflection. I had taught First-

Year Composition in the past, but had never been required to ask my students to reflect on their writing. And while I had occasionally assigned informal reflective writing activities in some of those classes, I had not pursued reflection with any consistency or rigor.

At Southwest State, however, all of the assignments I was to give to my students were to include opportunities for reflection, but there was little guidance from either the curriculum or from the director about how to implement reflective practice in the classroom, and about how such practices might be taught, and might be used to improve my students' learning and my own teaching. Essentially, instructors in the program were left to their own devices to implement the reflection elements. The English department, in which the First-Year Composition Program is housed, provided useful resources in terms of syllabus construction, assignment-writing, classroom activities, and rubrics, but little of this information was directed toward reflective practices. And as someone who had been teaching for over a decade, I was confident in my abilities to create a syllabus, write assignments, and engage in meaningful classroom activities, but I was anxious about the idea of reflection. Specifically, I felt uncertain about how to teach reflection, and I was worried about how my students would respond to my requiring them to reflect on their writing. Past experiences had taught me that students often found reflection to be a burden, or an opportunity to try to please me by saying the "right" things. Further, I was aware from the composition scholarship on reflection that the practice is controversial, for numerous different reasons (see, for example, Emmons, 2003; Erlandson, 2005; Fendler, 2003; Jensen, 2010; Jung, 2011, Kinsella, 2009). In addition, I didn't feel

confident about integrating reflective practices into a curriculum that was unfamiliar to me and that seemed like it was going to be challenging for students.

As I have indicated, the director of Southwest State's writing program had created sample documents (syllabi, writing prompts, and rubrics) for instructors to use. As a new instructor at Southwest State, and as a "contingent" faculty member, I felt that it was imperative for me to carefully follow all of the requirements for the course as they were laid out in these documents. There were, however, no sample prompts for reflective writing. In an attempt to follow the guidelines for the course presented in the course outcomes,[7] I used a combination of the rubrics, the course description, and the First-Year Composition Program Philosophy and Mission Statement to create prompts for the reflective writing assignments I gave my students. Although my assignments seemed to align with the requirements as they were laid out in these documents, they felt clumsy. This clumsiness contributed to my uncertainties about how students would respond to the reflective writing I would be requiring them to do for the class.

To further compound my anxieties about including reflection in the classroom, early in the semester, I learned that I would be required to evaluate my students' reflections as part of a new program of state-mandated outcomes evaluations. Because Southwest State is a public, state-funded university, it is required by the state to conduct outcomes assessments, in part to ensure future funding, and also for reaccreditation purposes. To complete these evaluations, all First-Year Composition instructors were provided with another rubric[8] that had been created by the director of the Writing

[7] See Appendix B for the text of the outcomes document.

[8] We were given rubrics for every formal essay assignment we were to give the students. In College Writing II, this included rubrics for the three *progymnasmata* exercises, and one rubric that addressed all

Program. Following this rubric, we were to evaluate, on a 1-5 scale, a number of aspects of students' expository and reflective essays (for example, we had to rate assignments in categories such as "audience," "invented ethos," "writing strategies," "rhetorical strategies," "teamwork," and "decision making"). This ran counter to what I thought I knew about reflective writing—that it should not be formally evaluated.

In being mandated to evaluate my students' reflective writing, I felt stuck between the demands of the institution (and more broadly, the state) and my students. The reflective assignments I asked my students to complete met with a fair amount of resistance in class, and I spent a lot of time answering the same questions about them and justifying the activity. I wanted to make my prompts better, and more engaging, but at the same time I worried about keeping my job. I worked with the resources and experience I had to create assignments that I hoped would be useful to students, and at the same time would fulfill the requirements of Southwest State's Writing Program. My aim with this dissertation is to better understand how my students perceived the reflective writing activities I was assigning them, with the goal of creating better assignments, and better incorporating reflection into regular classroom activities. I also wanted to explore and understand the tensions I felt between the rubric requirements I had to follow and the requirement to assign my students reflective writing.

To design what I hoped would be effective assignments, I referred to documents that defined the First-Year Composition Program. The data I analyze in this chapter are these documents—the Philosophy and Mission Statement and the College Writing II course description. I use discourse analysis here to analyze these documents to

three parts of the final project for the class—an audience analysis, a research essay, and a reflective analysis. The rubric that we used for the state assessment was a separate rubric that pertained only to the final three-part assignment.

understand both what institutional identity they construct for the First-Year Writing Program, as well as how the identities of students are constructed by the institution.

Discourse Analysis and the Power of Language

I used Gee's methods of discourse analysis as a lens through which to consider Southwest State's stated mission for its first-year writing courses. Mission statements are important because they identify the purpose, values, culture, and norms of an organization. For Gee (2005/2014), 'Discourse' involves situated identities, ways of performing certain identities or activities, ways of coordinating and being coordinated, and ways of acting, feeling, thinking, believing, speaking, etc. Discourse is what we use to define ourselves, and determined how we are defined, in the world, in particular contexts, and in relationship to other people and institutions. Although the students I interviewed for this project never spoke directly about their own sense of power in the classroom, power and questions of who possess it clearly emerged as a theme in their interviews, particularly in response to questions I asked about reflective writing assignments.

When it comes to engaging in discourse analysis, Gee (2005) writes

> Essentially, a discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place and how the aspects of the situation network simultaneously give meaning to that language (remember reflexivity). (p. 110)

To understand how the language of the Mission Statement and Course Description of Southwest State's First-year Writing Program works to build the identities of both the

institution and students, I turn to Gee's (2015) "building tasks." Gee (2015) uses the phrase "building tasks" to describe how language makes meaning:

> In the broadest sense, we make meaning by using language to say things that, in actual contexts of use, amount, too, to doing things and being things. These things we do and are (identities) thereby come to exist in the world, and in turn, they bring about other things in the world. We use language to build things in the world, to engage in world building, and to keep the social world going. (p. 31)

He identifies "seven building tasks of language," and recommends building tasks, and related questions, to consider when analyzing discourse data. Gee's (2015) seven building tasks are significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics (the distribution of social goods), connections, and sign systems and knowledge.

D/discourse

One important aspect of Gee's theory of discourse is his "distinction between 'Discourse' with a 'big D' and 'discourse' with a 'little d'" (2005, p. 7). For Gee, discourse refers to "language-in-use," while Discourse describes language-in-use, or discourse, in combination with "everything else at human disposal" working together to enact specific identities (2014, p. 24). For example, when I walk into my classroom on the first day of the semester, the behaviors that I display, my appearance, and anything I might be carrying work along with what I say to signify to the other individuals in the room that I am the instructor. In fact, in most cases my behaviors indicate my role in the classroom even before I speak. I walk into the room, put my possessions on the large desk that is by itself at the front of the room (in contrast to the smaller student desks that are close to each other and in rows), and turn on the computer. I try to dress relatively

formally when I teach, and am usually carrying the course textbooks, copies of the syllabus, and notes about my lesson plan. So while I use discourse when I speak to the students to introduce myself to the class as the instructor, I also use Gee's concept of Discourse—my actions and behavior along with what I say—to communicate both my role and identity in the classroom. In essence, I become the personification of the university's mission statements and curriculum.

To determine which of Gee's seven building tasks I would focus on in my analysis, I began by coding the Philosophy and Mission statement and the College Writing II course description using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Open coding involves breaking data down analytically and identifying similarities and differences in events. It also involves creating categories and subcategories, and locating conceptually similar events into these categories subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I looked for themes that emerged from this coding process that were relevant to my research questions about institutional identity and student roles. Using the themes that emerged from the open coding process, I applied Gee's (2014) seven building tasks. Three of these tasks proved to be effective in my data analysis: significance, identities, and relationships. I continued to make additional passes through the documents, using axial coding, which is the process of relating categories to subcategories, further developing categories, and testing relationships between categories and subcategories against the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Axial coding allowed me to further identify themes that were relevant to the questions Gee encourages analysts to ask within each building task.

Significance Building Task

Gee describes significance in the following: "how and what different things mean—the sorts of meanings and significance they are given—is a component of any situation" (2005, p. 98). In other words, the significance of a thing or event is not inherent—we use language and actions ("Discourse") to make things significant, and the manner of significance something has depends on context. For example, when I bring a writing assignment to a professional development workshop that is conducted by my superiors, one aspect of the significance of the document lies in whether or not it accurately represents the goals of the First Year Composition Program, has laid out clear expectations for my students, and is clearly written. In the context of a workshop, this document is a work in progress, one that will (most likely) be revised and changed, and one that opens me up to a certain amount of (expected) scrutiny and criticism from my colleagues. When I hand out the same document to my students in class, however, it has a very different kind of significance. While it should still be clear in terms of both writing and expectations, it is no longer understood to be a text that will be revised, and the kind of scrutiny it (and in turn I) might receive is very different. My students may not like the assignment, but both they and I know they will be expected to complete it, and that the ways they complete it will be evaluated. This isn't to say that students do not criticize my writing assignments—they have and will continue to do so. But while my colleagues might critique them because they do not adequately represent the mission and purpose of the writing program, my students might critique them because they find them to be too long, or unclear, or demanding. In short, the same document has very different meanings in different contexts: for my students, it is a task they must complete; for my peers, it is one example of how I create an assignment pertaining to a topic we all have to address

with our students; for my superiors, it is an example of (amongst other things) how I represent the institution.

To determine the significance of the institutional identity of Southwest State's First-year Writing Program, I used the following four questions to analyze the text of the Program's Philosophy and Mission Statement and the College Writing II course description:

1. What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation?

2. What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, people, objects, artifacts, and institutions relevant to the situation?

3. What situated meanings and values are attached to other oral and written texts quoted or alluded to in the situation (intertextuality)?

4. What institutions and/or Discourses are being (re-)produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act? (Gee, 2005, p. 110-111)

Identities Building Task

Gee defines identities as "any situation involves identities as a component, the identities that the people involved in the situation are enacting and recognizing as consequential" (2005, p. 98). He explains that individuals use language to construct recognizable identities in the "here-and-now," and that in doing so, we work to enact specific social identities at specific social times. For example, when I am teaching in the classroom, I speak and act as a "teacher," using language and behavior that signals to the students that I am the individual in the room who is responsible for helping them to learn,

and that I am the individual in the room who will evaluate their coursework. In contrast, when I go to my office after class, I speak and act with my office-mates as a colleague (albeit still one who is a teacher), using language and behavior that signal that I am a peer. It is not a given that students will recognize me as a teacher, or that colleagues will recognize me as a peer—I have to consistently enact these identities over time in an appropriate context for them to be successful (Gee, 2014, p. 99).

To understand how the documents associated with Southwest State's First-Year Writing Program create particular identities for the institution, for students, and for me, I considered the following questions about building identities:

> 1. What identities (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant to, taken for granted in, or under construction in the situation?
> 2. How are these identities stabilized or transformed in the situation?
> 3. In terms of identities, activities, and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways? (p. 111)

Relationships Building Task

Finally, as a building task, Gee (2005) describes relationships as the following: "any situation involves relationships as a component, the relationships that the people involved enact and contract with each other and recognize as operative and consequential" (p. 99). That is, we use language to indicate the kind of social relationships we have, or want to have, with others. When I ask current students to refer

to me as "Ms. Steele," I am indicating that I expect a certain degree of formality in the way they address and interact with me. When I ask former students to please refer to me as "Mariah," I am indicating that I would like to have a more informal and more equal relationship with them (Gee, 2005). Questions about building relationships include:

> 1. What sorts of social relationships seem to be relevant to, taken for granted in, or under construction in the situation?
> 2. How are these social relationships stabilized or transformed in the situation?
> 3. How are other oral or written texts quoted or alluded to so as to set up certain relationships to other texts, people, or Discourses?
> 4. In terms of identities, activities, and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways? (pp. 111-112)

I used these questions to guide my analysis of the relationship Southwest State's English Department tries to create with students via the documents the describe and define the First-Year Writing Program.

First-year Writing Program Philosophy and Mission Statement

Although first-year writing programs are ubiquitous at colleges and universities across the country, they are not without controversy. Large, ongoing, contentious discussions about such programs prevail, including conversations about the purposes of the programs, questions of who should "own" the programs, and how and to what extent they should be funded. And as colleges and universities generally, and individual departments and programs specifically, must increasingly fight for funding, programs

such as first-year writing find themselves in the position of being required to justify their existence. Seemingly in response to such controversies, NCTE (2013) published a Policy Research Brief demonstrating four broad ways in which first-year writing benefits students. Authors of the Brief noted that in addition to fostering both retention and engagement, first-year writing helps students to develop writing skills throughout and after college, to develop metacognitive awareness, and to develop responsibility for their work and learning (NCTE, 2013).

Like many public colleges and universities, Southwest State must demonstrate the efficacy of its First-Year Writing Program to a number of entities, particularly when it comes to funding. According to the current director of the program, the average annual operating budget of First-Year Writing Programs at public institutions comparable to Southwest State is $50,000. Southwest State's First-Year Writing Program, however, has been operating on a budget of $900.00 annually. For the director to obtain more money for the program, he must be able to show that a program that enrolls over 5,000 students per year is effective in fulfilling its mission. This explains the intense pressure on instructors to follow a particular curriculum, so that the department can collect assessment data to demonstrate the program's efficacy.

At the time that I collected data for this project, individual instructors were allowed to develop their own assignments, but were strongly encouraged to use assignments that had been created by the then program director[9]—assignments that were explicitly based on the course Philosophy and Mission Statement and the course description. It became important to me to examine and analyze those foundational

[9] As of fall 2015, there is a new program director, and the curriculum for the course has changed completely. See Appendix F for information about the new version of the course. The course description and Philosophy and Mission have not changed, and can only be changed by English Department vote.

documents so that I understand how these documents worked to create the First-Year Writing Program's institutional identity, and the identity it in turn creates for students.

As indicated earlier, the documents that describe the First-Year Composition Program at Southwest State consist of a Philosophy and Mission statement, and course descriptions for College Writing I and College Writing II. The Philosophy and Mission statement provides first a general description of the goals and purposes of the sequence of courses, followed by two paragraphs that describe the goals of each class (College Writing I and II, respectively) in a bit more detail. There is also an "Outcomes" document that lists the skills and abilities that students are to work on developing in the courses, as well as a brief overview of the kinds of assignments students are expected to complete ("Means").

To enable the analysis of data, I have divided the text of the Philosophy and Mission Statement and the College Writing II course description into stanzas, each of which highlights "one important event, happening, or state of affairs at one time and place, or it focuses on a specific character, theme, image, topic, or perspective" (Gee, 2014, p. 234-235). Following is the complete text of the First-Year Writing Program's Philosophy and Mission Statement:

Stanza 1:

1a. The First-Year Composition Program at [Southwest State] reflects a central

1b. commitment to pursuing the study and practice of writing as a meaningful,

1c. complex activity defined not only by processes, forms, grammars, and styles,

1d. but also by the acts of discovering, exploring, and listening to the world

1e. around us.

Stanza 2:

2a. We believe that each writer has a stake in shaping the world through writing.

Stanza 3:

3a. For this reason, our courses at [Southwest State] prepare students to intervene

3b. rhetorically in a variety of communities, including both academic and

3c. nonacademic contexts.

Stanza 4:

4a. Through our curriculum, students learn to use a wide repertoire of

4b. strategies, styles, forms, and conventions in order to engage most effectively

4c. with diverse audiences.

Stanza 5:

5a. Strong habits of rhetorical analysis and production are developed in a

5b. number of effective classroom practices, including collaboration, discussion,

5c. reflection, and, of course, frequent opportunities to write and revise.

Stanza 6:

6a. Overall, we invite students to join with us in questioning writing: this process

6b. of questioning includes exploring new forms and contexts for writing that are

6c. emerging constantly around us.

Stanza 7:

7a. By the time students have completed the courses in the Introductory Writing

7b. sequence, they will be prepared to respond appropriately to the demands of

7c. writing they encounter as they move into new settings both in the university

7d. and beyond.

The following points that I make about this document result from my analysis using Gee's (2014) discourse analysis techniques. Although the document I reproduce above is the most easily accessible document for an individual trying to get more information[10] about the First-Year Composition courses, it is not clear who is the audience for the document. Given that this is the only public document describing the mission, goals, and courses of the First-Year Composition Program, it would seem that the audience should be students and perhaps parents. The way the document is written, however, suggests that in fact, the intended audience is faculty and individuals in the Academy. The sentences are overly long and complex (see, for example, the long sentence that makes up stanza 1), the vocabulary is sophisticated (for example, words like "repertoire," and phrases such as "new forms and contexts for writing,") and overall, the language is very academic and specific. Gee (2015) notes that such specific language, in this case phrases like "intervene rhetorically," and "rhetorical analysis," works deliberately to exclude individuals who are not familiar with it.

In particular, the language of the Philosophy and Mission statement is specific to academics in particular fields—those who teach and study writing, rhetoric, and composition. To consider one example of specific language from the document, in stanza one, the word "grammars" (line 1c) has particular meanings in the context of writing pedagogy that are likely to be completely foreign to individuals outside of the field. That is, I would suggest that most people consider "grammar" to be something one studies and gets "right" or "wrong" in English class, something that one uses unconsciously every

[10] The course catalogue descriptions (which are different than the course description I discuss below) of College Writing I and II are quite brief and vague. They read: "Writing as a means of ordering and shaping experience, information, and ideas. Emphasis on perfecting texts through several drafts" and "Continuation of College Writing I. Writing in response to reading and research. Emphasis on perfecting texts through several drafts," respectively.

day, and doesn't think much about; the idea that there can be multiple legitimate "grammars" is unfamiliar to someone who does not study and/or teach writing. By using the word "grammars" in this way, the document becomes one that is addressed toward insiders. Most students who will be taking the class will not understand the particular meaning of "grammars" as it is used in this text.

The use in the Philosophy and Mission Statement of specialized vocabulary from writing pedagogy also suggests situated meanings that are certainly familiar to scholars and teachers in the fields of English, Rhetoric, and Composition. According to Gee (2015), "Situated meanings arise because particular language forms take on specific or situated meanings in different contexts of use" (p. 83). Words and phrases in stanza one such as "processes," "forms," "styles," "intervene rhetorically," "rhetorical analysis and production," and "exploring new forms and contexts for writing," have specific, particular, and complex meanings for rhetoric and composition scholars and teachers. Such language is likely, however, to be unfamiliar to students, and especially to first-year students. Furthermore, these are terms and phrases that are highly valued by such scholars. This passage demonstrates a recognizable academic Discourse, and a distinctive Discourse model. Gee defines Discourse models as "'theories' (storylines, images, explanatory frameworks) that people hold, often unconsciously, and use to make sense of the world and their experience in it" (2005, p. 61). The language of the Philosophy and Mission statement for the First Year Composition Program exhibits both discipline- and institution-specific Discourse, one that seems to simultaneously privilege those who are familiar with such Discourse, and exclude those who are not (namely, the very students who will take the courses). This privileging serves to position Southwest State's First-

year Writing Program as a part of an exclusive group that recognizes the value of the academic terminology that is used in stanzas one, three, four, and five.

Important words and phrases that appear in the Philosophy and Mission Statement are working to position readers of these documents in a community of writers who engage in common practices that are valued by the participants in the program, the English Department, the University, and the world at large. Regarding such positioning, Janks (2005b) writes: "Texts work to position their readers; and the ideal reader, from the point of view of the writer (or speaker), is the reader who buys into the text and its meanings. Another way of saying this is to say that all texts are positioned and positioning" (p. 97). Words such as "world," "community," "diverse," "join," and "settings" (in stanzas one, two, three, six, and seven, respectively) emphasize the invitational tone of the document (which in fact contains the phrase "we invite students to join with us"). On the other hand, this invitation does not appear until the second-to-last sentence of the document (stanza six).

At the same time, the use of the seemingly inclusive pronouns "us," "our," and "we" suggests that students who take first year composition classes at Southwest State will become part of an existing community of writers who are able to engage via writing not only with their peers, but also with their instructors, other faculty in the English Department, and writers in the world at large. This community recognizes the significance of the language of writing pedagogy—words and phrases I noted above, such as "grammars," "processes," "forms," and "intervene rhetorically," for example. As it appears in stanzas two and six, "we" is clearly describing writers who have achieved not only familiarity with the language of writing pedagogy, but also facility with writing.

The passage explicitly differentiates between "writers" (stanza two) and "students," (stanza three), suggesting that students who have not taken First-Year Writing courses at Southwest State are not writers. Students are invited to "join" with the "us" (stanza six) that is identified as "writers" (stanza two) in the statement, but the text does not indicate that "they" (stanza seven) will actually become writers themselves. Rather, they will be able to "respond appropriately to the demands of writing they encounter" (stanza seven). The passive construction of the phrase "demands of writing" implies that rather than becoming a part of the community of writers identified in the passage, students will always be "they," will always be "other", *responding* to "demands of writing" rather than *being* writers.

The relationships that are suggested by the Philosophy and Mission statement refer to a certain kind of community, one which a certain kind of student may be able to join, depending on his or her success at completing the First-Year courses. In other words, in spite of its seemingly invitational tone, the use of pronouns in this document stabilizes relationships that already exist, rather than transforming relationships in a way that might benefit students. Building on Fairclough's (2015) assertion that different pronouns have different relational values, and that the way pronouns are used in text can convey inclusion, exclusion, and authority, Janks (2005a) suggests that pronouns that imply assimilation and sameness do so by constructing difference as negative. Although Southwest State's Philosophy and Mission statement abounds with the pronouns "us," "our," and "we", the majority of these pronouns is exclusive, while only one, in the second to last sentence, is inclusive. That is, most of the paragraph is referring to a community of "writers" that already exists at Southwest State, one that "students"

reading this document are not a part of, and one that they cannot become a part of until they have "completed the courses in the Introductory Writing sequence."[11]

Although the program appears to be encouraging community and valuing diversity, this inclusive "us" (stanza 6) only appears in the context of students doing what the community at Southwest State is already doing: "questioning [writing by] exploring new forms and contexts for writing that are emerging constantly around us" (stanza six). In the process of attempting to create a community of writers who question writing, however, this statement suggests that the kinds of writing students may already be doing and the kinds of questions they may already be asking about writing before they take First-Year Composition are inadequate to gain them membership into Southwest State's community of writers. It also suggests that the writing that students may already be doing is neither "meaningful" nor "complex" (stanza one).

Three additional elements that emerged from my analysis further demonstrate how the focus of this document is ultimately on Southwest State rather than students. First, the invitation to students (non-writers) to join the (established) community of writers does not appear until the end of the paragraph (stanza six). Second, the very first words of the document specifically name Southwest State (which is particularly significant given that it is impossible to access the document at all without going through the university's English Department). Together, these elements work to emphasize that this is a document created by scholars for insiders, such as other scholars and administrators who control the program, rather than a document that explains to students the purpose of the First-Year Composition courses they are required to take. In fact,

[11] What is not said here is that students must "successfully" complete these courses. That is, if a student does not complete the course with a grade of C or better, he or she has to retake the course.

despite the invitational tone of the paragraph, and indeed the direct invitation that is eventually made to students ("we invite students to join with us,") the word "students" does not appear in the text until well into the paragraph (in stanza three), and students do not seem to be either the focus of the paragraph or the intended audience for the paragraph.

In considering the elements this passage makes significant, as well as the relationships and identities it suggests (Gee, 2005, 2014), it becomes apparent that what is valued in this description is Southwest State's "commitment to pursuing the study and practice of writing," rather than on, say, Southwest's State's commitment to helping students pursue this study and practice. Even in the discussion in stanzas four and five of what students will presumably do in the classroom, the passage moves from active to passive voice: "Students learn to use a wide repertoire of strategies, styles, forms, and conventions in order to engage most effectively with diverse audiences. Strong habits of rhetorical analysis and production *are developed* in a number of effective classroom practices, including collaboration, discussion, reflection, and, of course, frequent opportunities to write and revise" (emphasis added). This turn from active to passive voice has the effect of making it not entirely clear what role students are expected to have in the classroom when it comes to these particular classroom practices. Fairclough (2015) notes that passive constructions can delete both causality and agency. In this example from stanza five, it is unclear who the agent is in the action of developing effective classroom practices. It is also unclear who the recipient is of this action.

In addition, the notion of learning to write for situations beyond the first-year writing classroom is made significant in this passage. References to "shaping the world

through writing," "intervene[ing] rhetorically in a variety of communities, including both academic and nonacademic contexts," and to students being "prepared to respond appropriately to the demands of writing they encounter as they move into new settings both in the university and beyond" suggest the importance of "transfer," or the ability of students to use what they learn and do in the first-year writing classroom "for new writing tasks in new settings" (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014, p.4). At the same time however, in the suggestion that there are appropriate kinds of writing (and the associated implication, then, that there are inappropriate kinds of writing) lies a certain tension. Specifically, as a teacher, I question how I can teach students to on the one hand "question writing" (line 6a) while at the same time ensuring that they leave my class knowing how to respond "appropriately" (line 7b) in writing to other settings they encounter. It is unclear here what is meant by "questioning" writing; are students expected to ask why they must write? Are they expected to question the purpose of writing? The document in fact suggests that students are not really expected to question writing itself, but rather are expected to question writing styles and structures ("forms," line 6b) as well as environments for writing ("contexts," line 6b).

An additional tension I identify in this passage is between ideas of exploration and knowledge. On the one hand, students are invited to join with "us in questioning writing" (line 6a), and in "exploring new forms and contexts for writing that are emerging constantly around us" (lines 6b-6c). It is not clear who is represented by the pronoun "us." As the First-Year Writing Program is housed within Southwest State's English Department, "us" presumably includes English Department faculty. But all First-

Year Writing courses at Southwest State are taught by graduate students, lecturers,[12] and adjuncts. The courses are designed and overseen by the Director of the First-Year Writing Program, who is a tenure-track faculty member. On the other hand, by the time students have completed the first-year writing courses, "they will be prepared to respond appropriately to the demands of writing they encounter" (line7b-7c). The way the passage describes the questioning and exploring of writing suggests ongoing, even life-time, activities in which writers should engage. At the same time, however, the notion of being able to "respond appropriately" suggests concrete knowledge, a point where questioning and exploration must result in "appropriate" response. It is not clear who will determine whether a student's response is "appropriate," but it is clear that students must quickly achieve a certain, albeit undefined, level of appropriateness in their writing.

Using Gee's (2005/2014) discourse analysis questions about significance, identity, and relationships to analyze Southwest State's Philosophy and Mission statement illustrates the ways in which the institution uses language to both generate and reinforce a community of insiders who are familiar with the genre of academic writing and rhetoric. In the following section, I discuss how the description of one of the First-Year writing courses similarly works to exclude students.

First-Year Composition Course Description

Like the Philosophy and Mission statement, the College Writing I and II course descriptions presume a degree of knowledge about the language of writing pedagogy that students are unlikely to recognize. Because the data I collected for this project was from

[12] At Southwest State, lecturers have either three- or five-year contracts, depending on their rank (Lecturer or Senior Lecturer). They teach a 4/4 course load, have service responsibilities, and some have research responsibilities. Lecturers in the English Department must have PhD's, and are not permitted to vote on departmental issues at faculty meetings. Whether or not a lecturer is allowed to vote seems to be determined by individual departments and colleges.

College Writing II, I will focus on that description here. The course description in full reads:

Stanza 1:

1a. College Writing II, the second sequence of the Freshman Writing Program,
1b. builds on the rhetorical principles of College Writing I by providing students
1c. with the opportunity to study, experience, and practice the basic rhetorical
1d. elements of academic writing, including thesis statements, claims, support,
1e. and counterargument.

Stanza 2:

2a. The College Writing II course is designed to anticipate students' need for a
2b. flexible framework of academic writing that will help them think through
2c. rhetorical situations extending beyond the first-year course.

Stanza 3:

3a. For this reason, students in College Writing II learn the rhetorical strategies of
3b. stasis theory, logical proof, and extrinsic proofs (such as data, facts, and
3c. textual authorities) as means of expanding their ability to invent arguments in
3d. diverse academic settings.

Stanza 4:

4a. The course also asks students to consider a range of perspectives on important
4b. contemporary issues and encourages students to engage academic audiences
4c. with accommodating, thoughtful, and well-supported written responses. The
4d. final assignment in this course asks students to write a thoroughly researched
4e. essay recommending action on a sensitive and timely social issue.

Stanza 5:

5a. Required nonfiction reading in College Writing II exposes students to longer,

5b. complex arguments about exigent social issues.

The language of this course description, like that of the Philosophy and Mission statement, suggests an audience that is situated to recognize terminology from rhetoric and composition scholarship and pedagogy. Terms such as "rhetorical principles," "rhetorical elements," "rhetorical strategies," "stasis theory," "logical proof," and "extrinsic proof" have specific meanings in specific contexts, and these meanings are unlikely to be familiar to students. In fact, in my experience, even students who have taken College Writing I come into College Writing II feeling like this language is foreign (in the next chapter I will discuss specific student reactions to the language of these courses, and the ways in which such language seems to reify rather than close the gap between students who come into the classes well prepared for success and those who are less well prepared), and like it is language of and for academics rather than students.

Conclusion: Reflections on Identities in First-Year Writing

Although the Philosophy and Mission and College Writing II documents were helpful in my pedagogical practice in that they provided guidance for creating the questions I asked my students to consider when engaging in reflective writing, they also felt somewhat restrictive because they seemed to be setting students up to reflect in particular ways and to particular ends. Indeed, a common critique of reflective practices in composition scholarship is that the way reflective writing is implemented and interpreted is limited and limiting, and that its purpose is less about student learning and

more about institutional outcomes. In fact, Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak (2014) note the following:

> Including reflection in writing classes by now, of course, is ubiquitous, but its use is often narrow and procedural rather than theoretical and substantive. Students are often—perhaps typically—asked to provide an account of process or to compose a "reflective argument" in which they cite their own work as evidence that they have met program outcomes. They are not asked to engage in another kind of reflection, what we might call big-picture thinking, in which they consider how writing in one setting is both different from and similar to the writing in another, or where they theorize writing so as to create a framework for future writing situations. (p. 4)

This aligns with where I felt my own reflective assignments failed: I had asked my students to address questions about how their work had fulfilled requirements of the assignment, and to cite examples. I had not, however, been successful at asking them to think more broadly about writing. In basing these assignments on the First-Year Writing Program Philosophy and Mission statement and the College Writing II course description, I had asked students to reflect on the institution's terms, rather than on their own. On the surface, these documents had seemed to encourage broad thinking about writing and writing process. In fact, they inscribed students in a narrow set of requirements, and expected them to think about writing in circumscribed ways.

But students are complicated. As I reevaluated my reflective assignments in light of my students' responses to them, their comments about them, and Gee's (2005, 2014) methods of using discourse analysis to understand how language can be used to say, do,

and be particular things, I realized that students did not necessarily perceive the assignments as restrictive. In the next chapter I discuss how for some students, reflection can be an opportunity resist the roles the institution is trying to define for them.

CHAPTER 5

AUDIENCES AND AUTHORITIES

As I indicated in Chapter Three, an important element of both First-Year Composition courses at Southwest State is audience. Instructors are expected to help students learn to identify particular audiences for their writing, and to help them to understand some of the nuances of writing for different audiences. In College Writing II (the course in which I collected data for this dissertation) the focus is, more specifically, on writing for academic audiences. For example, goals and outcomes for the course include engaging students in "considering the expectations academic audiences have for written arguments," and helping them to "understand conventions expected by academic audiences." They are also expected to "keep audiences interested," and to "persuade academic audiences."

But in over 15 years of teaching various writing classes, I have learned that there are a number of challenges that come with trying to fulfill these goals and outcomes in the classroom.[13] For example, many students struggle to get beyond the notion that I am their only audience, and that they need to figure out how to write for me. And they are, of course, writing for me, as I am almost always reading their work, responding to it, and often evaluating it. To encourage students to think more broadly about potential audiences for their writing, I tell them to consider me as part of their academic audience, rather than as the primary audience for whom they are writing.

Once I do persuade students to think more broadly about their audience, however, they often lean towards thinking too broadly, saying they are writing for "all Americans,"

[13] There is also relatively little scholarship about teaching students about audience. There are studies and analyses of how students perceive, and perform for audiences (see Ross, 2011, 2014), but I struggled to find research about how to teach students about audience.

or "all members of the federal government," or "all academics at Southwest State." In general, students have difficulties understanding what constitutes an "academic audience." In an attempt to help them better understand what I mean when I tell them they need to be writing for an "academic audience," I incorporate numerous activities throughout the semester that are designed help clarify the concept for them. Examples of such activities include writing prompts asking them to describe, in great detail, the characteristics of the audience they have identified for their work; a group activity that requires different groups to prepare and analyze a brief presentation on a topic chosen by the class to audiences from different academic disciplines; discussing the ways various readings identify and appeal to certain audiences; and engaging in guided peer-critique of the formal "audience analysis" essay students must turn in for evaluation.

In spite of these activities, however, discussions about audience continue to dominate my conversations with students, particularly when they are writing reflective essays. By the second formal assignment of the semester, students know they need to be defining an audience for their writing. However, even the students who had seemed to develop confidence in identifying audiences for their expository essays struggled with figuring out who they were writing for when they were writing reflective essays. In fact, in reviewing the field notes I wrote during and immediately after class on days students were writing reflections, I found that I had to answer the question "who is our audience" at least once per class, even at the end of the semester.[14]

[14] As I have described, in my class, students wrote three reflective essays in class, and wrote one as a take-home assignment. They also should have written reflections in their College Writing I class. My expectation was that after the first or second essay, they would be familiar with the assignment and would anticipate my answer to their questions about audience, which was "I will be reading your essays, but not grading them. They are primarily for you."

Ultimately, it was my students' ongoing struggles to identify an audience for their reflective writing that led me to develop my second research question: What are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? How do they acknowledge that their audience is an academic one when they are doing reflective writing? In this chapter, I turn to these questions and suggest that for some students, the genre of reflection allows them to develop a sense of audience that is complex, and that is about the potential for dialogue and exchange. Although the scholarship suggests that for students to benefit from reflection they must do it for themselves, the students I discuss here acknowledge that when they engage in reflection, they do so quite deliberately for a particular audience, and that this audience is an important part of their reflection. I will elaborate on these findings later in this chapter.

Exploring Student Perceptions of Audience and Authority

It is common in scholarship on reflective writing to read instructors' observations about, and assessments and critiques of, students' reflective writing, but it is rare to find scholarship that includes students' observations about their own reflective writing (see, for example, Flower, 1994; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Tucker, 2000; and Yancey, 1998). As noted above, one of the key questions I had about student experiences of writing reflective essays was how students perceived the audience for whom they were writing reflective pieces. As a teacher, and someone who has studied writing pedagogy, I was aware of research on the value of reflective writing. And yet I took for granted that students would recognize the word "reflection" in the assignments as meaning the reflective essays they wrote were opportunities for them to mull over their own thought and writing processes, to critique their work, to articulate what they know. Like Boud

(2001), Boud & Walker (1998), and Creme (2005), I believed that assessing student reflections might result in students censoring themselves, and thus might undermine reflection. In an attempt to prevent such censorship, every time I gave reflective assignments that students were to complete in class, I explained that I might read them and would comment on them, but I would not grade them.[15] Because I had explained this, I naively assumed that if I told students I wouldn't be evaluating the essays, they wouldn't focus on writing for me, but would instead take the opportunity to write for themselves. I had hoped they would engage in the activity as D'Aoust (1992) describes it:

> Reflection is the act of pausing to see oneself as a writer. It creates awareness, a sort of self-consciousness about oneself as a writer. It enables a writer to celebrate his or her strengths as well as identify areas to be developed. (p. 43)

As I read and commented on students' reflective essays, however, it became clear that in many cases, students were writing for someone other than themselves, and I began to wonder for whom they thought they were writing. Ross (2014) suggests that when students write reflectively, they do so for three potential reasons/audiences: to please teachers, to be assessed, and/or to address a general "Other" (p. 219). As noted in the table below, I found that some students also considered a fourth reason to reflect: for the institution (which students identified as "the English Department," or my "boss"). It might be argued that the institution could fall under any of the three categories Ross

[15] My understanding of what I was to "do" with reflective essays was vague at best, and I was unable to get a clear response about how I was to use these texts. A section of the rubrics we were given contained references to reflection (see Appendix A), but they were not assigned any point value, and therefore it seemed we were not to evaluate reflective practices. At the same time, however, at the end of the semester we were required to submit to the State an evaluation of students' reflective practices and abilities (though I was not aware that this would be required until late in the semester, after I had already been assigning reflective essays in conjunction with each essay I assigned as required by the course curriculum). I was deliberately vague with my students about what I would "do" with the first three reflections they wrote for the class, though I did emphasize that they would not be evaluated. I made it clear, however, that I was required to evaluate the final reflection they did, both for a grade that they would receive and for the State.

identifies. I am, to my students, a representative of the institution. As a representative of the institution, I am required to assess my students' writing, even some of their reflective writing. And the general "Other" could most certainly include the institution. However, my students' responses indicated that they saw the institution as a separate audience to consider in their reflections.

To try to understand how my students perceived the audience for their reflections, when I conducted interviews with them, I asked, "Who do you think was the audience for your reflective essays?" I deliberately left this question open, and did not provide any examples that they might use in their answers, as I wanted them to tell me whatever came to mind. Following is a table that presents the responses of the eight students I interviewed. I have noted in first, second, and third order, their answers to the question:

Table 5.1: Student Identifications of Audiences for Reflective Essays

Student Name	Self	Me (Instructor)	Institution	Other
Alexa	1			
Deborah		1		2
Dylan	3	1	2	
Jessica	1	2		
John	1	3		2
Paul	1	2		
Susan	2	1	3	
Teresa		1	2	

In general, the responses I indicate in this table show some overlap with the three categories Ross (2014) identifies; most students were quick to identify me, two identified

a general "Other," and three identified the Institution, which might be associated with assessment criteria. A number of students also identified themselves as the primary audience for their reflections, which makes sense given that I had told them repeatedly that the reflective writings were supposed to be for their own learning and benefit.

As in the previous chapter, I use Gee's (2014) discourse analysis to more deeply understand both my students' responses to my interview questions about their reflective writing and their reflective essays. Gee's (2014) approach to discourse analysis helped me to better understand how these students perceived their roles in my classes and their relationship to me, as they experienced them through their reflective writing activities. It also helped me to realize some of the ways my own ideas about reflective practice were naïve at best, and misguided at worst, and encouraged me to explore how I might think more critically about my role, responsibilities, and expectations in the classroom.

Data Organization and Analysis

Following Gee's (2014) method, I have organized the selected interview transcripts I analyze into lines. Gee (2014) explains that speech is generally produced in "small spurts," and that in English, each spurt usually contains new information (p. 154). Breaking larger passages of text into lines helps to indicate (and make clear) certain features of the text, such as patterns, repetition, pauses, and the emergence of themes and meanings (Gee, 2014).

On each day that a "formal" essay was due in class (three times over the course of the semester), I asked students to write a reflective essay in class,[16] which they turned in with the "formal" essay. I read, commented on, graded, made copies of, and returned to

[16] See Appendix D for the questions I asked students to address in their reflective essays.

students the "formal" essays. I also read, occasionally commented on, made copies of, and returned to students the reflective essays. Data analysis, as discussed in chapter three, was conducted after the semester in which I collected data was over,[17] and consisted of multiple passes through students' reflective essays, transcripts of semi-structured interviews, and my field notes. On my first pass, I noted references to audience that students made in their essays and in interviews, as well as questions about audience that I was asked in class and noted in my field notes. I was looking for moments when students used similar language to describe their perceptions of the audience for their reflective writing. Examples of categories I identified were words like "talking," and "dialogue," which indicated that students perceived their reflective essays as opportunities to engage in conversation with the audience.

On the second pass through reflective essays and interview transcripts, I applied two of Gee's (2014) seven buildings tasks, focusing on the ways students described themselves as 1) engaging in certain social practices, and 2) enacting relationships. I chose three focal students and coded their interview transcripts and their essays (a total of twelve essays). The following sections are profiles of the three students, John, Deborah, and Susan, all of whom described their reflective writing as opportunities to communicate with their audience. I have included these profiles to provide readers with an understanding of each student and his or her background.

Focal Subjects: Three Student Writers

The three students I feature in this chapter represent the diverse student body at Southwest State. John and Deborah are both considered "non-traditional" students, and

[17] I did not receive IRB approval to use student work and conduct interviews until the last week of the semester, and therefore could not analyze student writing as data until after the semester had ended.

were both returning to college to earn Bachelor's Degrees after having had successful careers in the military and nursing, respectively. Southwest State has a relatively high population of "returning" students, and I have had a few "non-traditional" students in at least one of my sections of College Writing II every semester I have taught the class. Susan is a "traditional" student, who was taking College Writing II after having taken my College Writing I class. When she told me at the end of College Writing I that she was planning to sign up for my College Writing II class, she explained that it was because she now knew me, and would "know what to expect."

John: A Confident, Accomplished Writer

At the time he took my class and agreed to be interviewed, John was 46 years old, had a 3.8 cumulative G.P.A., and was in the process of completing a Bachelor's of Applied Arts and Sciences, with an emphasis in Public Administration, after having had careers in both the military and law enforcement. John had been in the Marine Corps for over 21 years, nine of which he spent as an officer, and had served as a police officer in a large urban city in the Southwest for approximately six years. As a law enforcement investigator, John reported having investigated everything from "stolen lawnmowers to homicides." In addition, John is a competitive shooter and was featured on a reality television show about competitive shooting. In his free time, John writes fantasy fiction; he self-published his first novel in 2011, and was writing his second at the time he was taking my class. He also writes a blog about firearms, gun shows, and what he describes as "gun issues." John was intending to go on to an MFA program in creative writing after finishing his Bachelor's degree; he told me he hoped to "hone his writing skills there, and to become a writer as a full-time career."

As a student, John was exceptional—in many ways, he was the "dream student," in that he was well prepared for the class (in addition to the fiction and blog writing he does, John had taken several literature and writing courses before he took my class, which is unusual—for the majority of the students I have, my second-semester composition class is their second, and sometimes even first, college-level writing course. He had also done extensive writing in his various jobs) and very motivated to succeed. John's writing was clear and confident, and in class, he was a natural leader. John enjoyed working with other students, provided what his classmates described as "very helpful" critiques of their work (a number of the students in the class told me they wanted to have John read their essays during peer workshop sessions), and was always engaged with and willing to contribute to class discussions, workshops, and activities. Although John had great confidence in his writing and his writing abilities and skills, he was also accepting of suggestions for improvement, and met them with respect, appreciation, and understanding.

Deborah: A Hesitant, Anxious Writer

Like John, Deborah was a non-traditional student. Unlike John, however, Deborah was very anxious about her writing abilities, and in turn, about her performance in my class; in fact, Deborah stayed after almost every class period to talk to me about her anxieties (Field Notes). Deborah came to Southwest State with an Associate's Degree that she received in 1995. She is a Registered Nurse who had worked in hospice care for 16 years and had decided to complete her Bachelor's degree so she could change careers to become a drug and alcohol counselor. Although Deborah had a 4.0 G.P.A at the time she took my class, she was very nervous about the class because she had been out of

school for 17 years, and the only writing she had done in that time was what she described as "documenting patient records." Deborah chose to attend Southwest State because she lives less than a mile from campus.

Deborah told me that she had been on her way to take her final exams for nursing school when the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing happened. She and her fellow students were told to skip their exams and go to the bombing site to assist in any way they could. This was a pivotal moment in Deborah's life, and one that she called on when it came time to choose a topic to write about for my class. Deborah was fascinated by the human impacts of wide-scale disasters, and wanted to write about them. However, as will become evident in the data I include below, Deborah struggled to figure out how to develop an argument about her topic. That is, she knew that to be successful in the class, she needed to write thesis-driven essays, but she struggled to move beyond narrative reporting of the disaster she was writing about (the tsunami that hit Indonesia in 2004). This struggle significantly increased Deborah's anxiety about the class, and is something she talked about in both her reflective essays and our interview.

Susan: A Rule-Follower

When I contacted Susan about being interviewed, she had just emailed me asking me to proofread a proposal she had written to raise funds in a local elementary school. The money she raised would be sent to an orphanage in Africa at which Susan had volunteered the previous summer. Susan was deeply committed to this organization, but her volunteer time there had been cut short when she ran out of money. Although she wanted to return to the orphanage, she could not afford to, and was trying to raise money to send directly to its organizers. When I interviewed Susan she was a 20 year-old

sophomore majoring in International Studies. She wasn't sure what her GPA was, but estimated it was "around a 3.8." Susan describes herself as South Korean; she was born in South Korea and moved with her family to a medium-sized city in the Southwest when she was five years old. Susan's family speaks Korean at home, and she describes herself as "fluent in Korean, but strongest in speaking and reading, and weak in writing."

Susan attended a high school that she described as being in a "very good" school district, and took AP classes as soon as she was able to. In terms of preparation for college-level writing, she told me, "we wrote a lot, I felt prepared, but I was always confused because different teachers will tell you different things about thesis statements, and what should be included and what shouldn't, and I didn't exactly know what university standards would be" (Interview). Susan had intended to go to college on the East Coast, and had received a scholarship covering part of her tuition, but realized just before she was to move that even with the scholarship, the tuition and living costs would be too much for her family to afford. She attended community college for one semester, and then enrolled at Southwest State, which is approximately 45 miles from her hometown. Susan was enrolled in my first-semester composition class and earned an A. She told me she wanted to take the second-semester class with me as well, and arranged her schedule so she could do so. I continue to correspond with Susan occasionally, have proofread numerous documents related to her extracurricular activities for her and have written her letters of recommendation for internships and scholarships. Last year, Susan was nominated by Southwest State to apply for both Rhodes and Marshall Scholarships. Unfortunately, she did not receive either scholarship.

Discourse Analysis Questions: Practices and Relationships

To address my research question about student perceptions of the audience for their reflective writing, I asked all focal students during interviews who they thought was the audience for their reflective pieces. As noted above, I have broken their responses into lines to demonstrate what Gee (2014) calls "focuses of consciousness," and to make them easier for the reader to follow. I begin with John's response, then include Deborah's, and end with Susan's. I briefly analyze each response after presenting it, and then follow with a more in-depth analysis of all three responses. Each response I present here is the answer to my interview question, "Who do you think was the audience for your reflective essays?"

John:

1. Well, I really think the reflective analysis
2. is for the writer.
3. But it's also for the people
4. that want to pursue it further
5. want to dialogue about it.
6. People that just move on,
7. it's not for them.
8. It's for me.
9. It's for those people
10. that are really interested.
11. They get more tidbits of information
12. for the argument.

Although John's initial response to my question about the audience for his reflective essay is the "ideal" answer, in the sense that it is the answer I believed I was looking for, the answer he elaborates on is his second answer—that his reflections are for "the people that want to pursue it further." He describes an audience that is "really interested" in his work, one that wants "to dialogue" about it, and that wants "more tidbits of information" about the argument. John did not elaborate on who he thought these people were, but he makes it clear that he believes they are invested in his writing, and want to learn more than they might get from a single essay. In talking about this imagined audience, John conflates his written reflection with the essay that he reflected upon,[18] suggesting that like the initial essay, the reflection contained new information that a reader could learn about. John's language suggests that he perceives his audience as one that desires to know more about his topic—he repeats the word "want" in his response, and emphasizes that this audience wants to "pursue" the topic further, and wants to "get more." In turn, John demonstrates that it is important to him that this audience recognizes that his work is significant; his reflective writing is not for the "people that just move on," rather, it is for people that he knows are out there, those who are genuinely interested in it.

John's response shows confidence, both in his own ability to engage in the practice of reflection and in his perception of audience. His immediate use of "really" emphasizes his strong sense of who his audience is, and he doesn't hesitate to identify two different audiences: himself ("the writer") and an unnamed, general "Other" (Ross, 2014) that John has constructed ("people that want to pursue it further"). John's

[18] To reiterate, students wrote a reflective essay in class on days "formal" papers were due. The reflective essays asked them to address specific aspects of their writing, writing process, and "formal" essays. See Appendix D for specific reflective essay assignments.

confidence is further evident in his description of this imagined audience as being interested in his writing; they are "the people that want to pursue it further, want to dialogue about it," and "those people that are really interested." For John, an important element of reflection is the opportunity it allows him to both establish a relationship with and engage in the practice of discussion with this "Other."

In contrast to John's confidence in his work, Deborah's response to my questions shows her anxiety about both her writing and her expectations of my reaction to her work. Like John, however, Deborah's language indicates that she too believes in the practice of reflection as allowing for, even encouraging, an exchange between writer and audience.

Deborah:

1. This to me
2. was my lifeline with you, ok?
3. it was me saying like
4. talking one on one with you,
5. saying let me tell you
6. what I think I'm trying to say.
7. I was trying to let you know
8. I am taking this seriously
9. I don't think I'm on the right track
10. but let me put down my thoughts
11. of what I think I'm trying to say
12. So that you could better understand

13. where to then turn around and guide me.

14. It was my lifeline to you.

In her response to my question, Deborah emphasizes that her reflective writing was a way to communicate with me, and also a way for her to work through her anxieties about her writing. In reiterating three separate times that she was uncertain about her essay ("What I think I'm trying to say . . . I don't think I'm on the right track . . . what I think I'm trying to say"), Deborah makes it clear that she viewed her reflective essays as a way to clarify to me what her goals were. In addition, Deborah describes the practice of writing reflective essays as allowing her to create an opportunity for me to help her ("So that you could better understand where to turn around and guide me"). Deborah emphasizes this idea of me helping her through her reflective essays by using the word "lifeline" in her answer twice. "Lifeline" is a powerful word that indicates the desperation Deborah felt about her writing, but also shows that she had great faith in my ability to assist her.

At the same time as Deborah suggests, by beginning and ending her response to my question with references to a "lifeline," that she saw reflective essays as an opportunity to get important assistance with her work, the bulk of her answer is about her attempts to clarify her own thinking and writing. Deborah perceived her reflective essays as an opportunity to "talk one-on-one" with me, and to tell me things she did not feel she could, or should, in other formats.

Deborah's repeated use of the word "lifeline" emphasizes not only the importance of the reflective essays to her, but also the importance of our relationship. She wanted me to know what she was thinking, and also wanted me to know that she didn't feel like she

was “on the right track.” When Deborah says, “let me tell you what I think I’m trying to say,” and “I am taking this seriously,” she demonstrates that she expected her reflective writing to offer me a deeper understanding of both her struggles with her work and her attempts to overcome those struggles.

Deborah’s description of her reflective essays shows that she perceived the practice of writing reflective essays as a chance to construct a way to share important information with me that she did not feel she could share with in the typical structure of the class. Deborah’s response indicates quite clearly that she believed she was writing her reflections for me, and was providing me with an opportunity to understand both her work and her motivations beyond the writing she was turning in.

Susan also acknowledged that she was writing for me, but Susan’s perception of her purpose in writing for me was very different than Deborah’s. For Susan, reflective writing was primarily about assessment.

Susan:

1. My answer would be something I knew you would want to hear.
2. You’re the grader, you’re who I’m trying to answer to
3. the one the questions are coming from
4. I try to answer in a way that you would probably appreciate
5. If my answers were for a different audience
6. our class instead of you,
7. it would be probably a little more honest.
8. I did this especially because I wanted to make this point
9. but I didn’t realize I did that

10. until you made me go back.

Susan's response to my question about audience was clear and direct, and reinforced our respective classroom roles of student and teacher.[19] Susan was the only interviewee who directly brought up grades (I did not grade three of the four reflective pieces I collected, and only graded the fourth because I was required to. With one exception, when I collect reflective essays, I read them and respond to them, but I do not grade them. The exception is the last reflective piece of the semester, which is a reflective essay associated with the final project, the research paper. I am required to grade this reflection as part of the course curriculum. I also have to evaluate it for the state assessment). Susan's repeated emphasis of "you" in lines five, six, nine, and 19 demonstrates the strength of her perception of me as her audience. In addition, her emphasis of the word "class," in line 13, serves as a powerful contrast. She cites the example of writing for the "class," rather than for me, and notes that if she had been writing for the class, she "would have been a little more honest." When she talks about being "honest" in line 15, Susan is referring back to lines three through six: "My answer would be / something I knew you / would want to hear / you're the grader." Susan contrasts her relationship with her classmates with her relationship to me, noting that with her classmates she is more "honest" in her responses, while with me she is writing what she believes will please me, and in turn, earn her a good grade.

[19] When I was interviewing Susan, I encouraged her to call me Mariah instead of Ms. Steele if she felt comfortable doing so. She laughed uncomfortably and said, "I don't know if I can. In Korea, if I called a teacher by their first name I would get punched in the face." This moment led me to reflect on my cultural assumptions about relationships between teachers and students. I do not discuss this moment here because it is a larger topic than I can address in this dissertation, and is not my focus. In addition, as Yancey (1998) notes, it is a topic that needs more reflection and more research.

The last lines of her response, however, prompted me to ask her a follow up question. In lines 16-19, Susan references "going back," and realizing something she had done because as the teacher, I "made [her] go back." After she said this, I said to Susan, "I appreciate your honesty, and that's a common answer. And, do you feel like yourself, you were the audience at any time?" Her response:

1. Not when I started
2. Oh I'm going to do this for myself
3. But in the process there were definitely times
4. when I was like oh, I did do that
5. And that's actually a really good point,
6. and I should do that next time.

Although Susan was adamant in her initial answer that I was the audience for her reflections, as she developed her response, she seemed to realize that in the process of enacting the traditional student-teacher relationship (in which the students writes for, and is graded by, the teacher), she came to understand that reflection could in fact give her insight into her work. In line eight, Susan's emphasis on "did" indicates her surprise at discovering that she did not need to rely on me to make her "go back" to find that she had "really good point[s]" and that she "should do THAT next time." For Susan, looking back at her reflections during our interview helped her to realize the benefits of reflection on her writing. This is consistent with Clegg and Bufton's (2008) assertion that the passage of time between students' reflection and what they are reflecting on can result in more meaningful and successful reflection.

Conclusion: Reflections on Audience and Authority

Critics of reflective writing often use their interpretations of student work to suggest that it is ultimately impossible for students to get out from under the authoritative gaze of the institution, and that as a result, reflective pieces become little more than "Disciplinary devices that improve[s] the operations of dominant education" (Jensen, 2010, p. 98). As I read my students' reflective pieces, it did often seem that they were surface-level responses to my questions that most certainly did not "facilitat[e] the continuous integration of knowledge, experience, and action" that scholars frequently cite as a goal of reflective practices (McGuire, Lay, and Peters, 2009, p. 3).

From student perspectives, however, reflective writing can offer the opportunity to solidify, deepen, and change relationships between writers and readers. The students I discuss in this chapter suggest that reflective pieces are not simply static documents that are created to fulfill course requirements and earn good grades. Rather, these students see such pieces as occasions to communicate with and connect to readers; in fact, in talking about their perceptions of audiences, they make it clear that they expect something in return from their audience, that they are not simply performing reflection for that audience. They are, in fact, viewing reflection as a chance to build an opportunity for their audience to reciprocate in some way. John expects the opportunity to further instruct his audience about his topic, and to engage in a dialogue about it. Deborah wants to clarify her thinking about her work, to explain her uncertainties, and to make it clear that she is trying. Even Susan, who essentially admits to only engaging in reflection to earn a grade, suggests that reflective writing allowed her to explain her thinking more fully ("I

did this especially because I wanted to make this point"). They can, through reflective pieces, assume a dynamic relationship with their audience.

John, Deborah, and Susan represent three different "types" of students that it is not uncommon for me to encounter in the classes I teach at Southwest State. John was a confident writer, who has vast experience with writing in different genres. He was eager to discuss his work, and to consider what his audience might have to say about it. In contrast, Deborah's anxiety about her writing was profound, and almost palpable in her work. She felt unprepared for the demands of College Writing II—in fact, in her second reflective essay her response to my question about what students would work on if they'd had more time was "Take College Writing I!" (emphasis in original). Susan fell somewhere in between. Her writing was accomplished, and she knew it, but she was very concerned about earning good grades. As she acknowledged in her interview, Susan knew how to "play the game." She knew to ask me to read drafts of her work[20], and to use language she believed I wanted her to use, to demonstrate that she was fulfilling the requirements of the class. Susan was one of a very few students who religiously read the rubrics I provided, and her assignments demonstrated that she used them to guide her writing.

I have lost track of Susan and Deborah, unfortunately. Through a Google search, I discovered that John is currently attending a university near Southwest State, where he is working on a Master's Degree, with dual concentrations in Creative Writing and Human Rights and Social Justice. I wonder if John continues to perceive his audiences as being interested in his work, and as wanting to discuss it with him. I wonder if in his graduate

[20] Because I usually have between 75 and 100 students a semester, I do not extend general invitations to read drafts of students' work. I will, however, always read a draft if a student asks me to, and will also offer to read drafts for students who seek my assistance outside of class.

program he is given the opportunity to engage in reflective writing. I wonder if Deborah has gained confidence in her writing, and if she is still writing. And I wonder if Susan has discovered yet that breaking some rules, in writing and in life, can lead to discoveries beyond what authority figures might sanction.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTIVE WRITING AND ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Context and Purpose

My field notes from the semester during which I collected most of my data for this dissertation abound with questions about whether or not my students are actually "getting it" in College Writing II. I have noted that many of their reflective essays use language from the course (words like logos, enthymeme, stasis theory, and extrinsic proof, to name a few), but they have not really explained how or why they have used the concepts behind the words. I have written that while I explicitly ask students to cite in their reflective writing examples from the essays the reflections are about, many of them do not. Even the students who easily earn A's on essays, who are strong writers, who seem to effortlessly meet assignment requirements, turn in reflective essays that essentially reproduce the questions I have asked. I have written that I do not like my reflective essay questions, and I do not think they are effective, but that I feel constrained by the rubric. At one point, I describe my frustration with the fact that although I do not know how I will have to assess students' reflections, I do know that I will. To me, these notes demonstrate that in my third semester of teaching at Southwest State, I am still trying to comprehend the curriculum, and trying to understand what is expected of me, from my department and my students. One of the most important outcomes of the course, according to the various documents I had been told to use to guide my class planning,[21] is that students learn academic discourse, but I was uncertain that I was helping my students

[21] First-Year Composition instructors are required to attend an orientation every August. We are shown and/or given copies of, the Philosophy and Mission Statement, the course descriptions, course outcomes, sample syllabi and assignments (which we are not required, but are strongly encouraged, to use), and rubrics.

to fulfill this outcome. In this chapter, I discuss my attempts to understand whether or not reflective writing enhanced student learning of academic writing.

In Chapter Four, I applied Gee's (2014) discourse analysis questions about significance, identities, and relationships to Southwest State's College Writing II course description and Philosophy and Mission Statement. I suggested that because this document determines the curriculum for College Writing II, it is important to consider how it represents students, and how it articulates what is expected of students who take the class. In Chapter Five, I focused on one of two particular aspects of student learning that the course curriculum emphasizes: audience. In this chapter, I discuss the second important outcome of College Writing II at Southwest State: learning academic writing.

The course description for College Writing II suggests that academic writing consists of "thesis statements, claims, support, and counterargument." It claims that the course is "designed to anticipate students' need for a flexible framework of academic writing that will help them think through rhetorical situations extending beyond the first-year course." And it suggests that students who complete the course will be able to "invent arguments in diverse academic settings," and to "engage academic audiences."[22] These skills and ways of thinking are, according to the curriculum, what students who complete the course successfully will master.

In my own classroom experience however, academic discourse, like audience, is a concept that students often struggle to understand. Over the years, I have found that even students who are confident, accomplished writers, and who easily earn high grades in the First-Year Writing classes, have trouble talking about and identifying academic discourse. And if, as scholars of reflection suggest (for example, Schön, 1983, 1987,

[22] For the full text of the College Writing II course description, see Appendix E.

1991; Yancey, 1992, 1997, 1998), the process of reflecting helps students to become increasingly skilled at using academic discourse, those results should then be borne out in their writing. But what I tended to see in a majority of students' reflective writing was rote use of terminology from the class, and vague references to "formal" writing. When we talked about academic writing in class, there was much more conversation about what academic writing was not (I noted one of these conversations in my field notes. Students said academic writing was not "slang," not "informal," not "texting words," not "words you use with your friends, or your family") than about what it was.

Ultimately, there were two challenges associated with teaching academic discourse that led me to develop my third set of research questions. First, I felt that I saw a disconnect between what students were supposed to be learning (according to the course curriculum, and the documents that informed it) about academic discourse in College Writing II and what it seemed like they were (or and were not) actually learning. Second, it was unclear to me that reflective writing was facilitating student knowledge of academic discourse. It seemed like while many students felt confident about what academic discourse was, they were much less confident about their abilities to use it. The following set of research questions represent my attempt to understand these disconnections: In what ways does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? How does reflective writing allow students to show their understanding of their own growing literacy in academic writing over time?

In this chapter, I apply Gee's (2014) discourse analysis questions about Significance and Sign Systems and Knowledge to student reflective writings and to transcripts of interviews I conducted with students. First, I briefly review the literature on

academic discourse to demonstrate the difficulties of trying to define the concept, and to situate my own teaching and research within the scholarship on the subject. I then discuss how, based on my analysis of their interviews and writing, the students I studied conceptualize academic discourse. I conclude with some suggestions about how reflective writing might be better used to facilitate student knowledge of and comfort with academic discourse.

The Challenges of Academic Discourse

There has been extensive scholarship and debate, conducted over decades, about what constitutes academic discourse (see, for example, Rose, 1985; Bartholomae, 1986; Bizzell, 1988; Harris, 1989; Elbow, 1991; Russell, 1995; Jones, 2000; Thonney, 2011). While some scholars argue that conventions of academic writing cannot be taught (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Freedman, 1993), others claim that there are particular, identifiable patterns and formulas in academic writing that students can benefit from learning (see, for example, Williams & Colomb, 1993). Although I tend to agree with Flower's (1989) assertion that "There is no Platonic entity called 'academic discourse' which one can define and master," to fulfill the requirements of my teaching position at Southwest State, I must do what I can to teach my students to use academic discourse (p. 3). As I noted above, the course description for College Writing II emphasizes that students will "practice the basic rhetorical elements of academic writing," will "need a flexible framework of academic writing," will need to "invent arguments in diverse academic settings," and will learn to "engage academic audiences." The course description does not, however, define what academic discourse is, nor is this a topic that

has been covered at any of the five First-Year Writing Instructor Orientations I have attended at Southwest State.

My own approaches to teaching academic discourse are consistent with Thonney's (2011) recommendations; we read academic texts from a variety of disciplines, and discuss what characterizes them in terms of their respective disciplines. We talk about different citation styles, and we look for and analyze patterns that occur across disciplines. We also discuss that academic writing is not a static entity that anyone ever fully masters, and does not have to keep exploring and practicing. Following Zamel, I believe that in asking students to reflect both in discussion and in writing about their own academic writing, I am "helping them to develop new frameworks of understanding, by allowing them to actively construct knowledge by locating meaning in their observations and interpretations" (p. 194).

Analysis: Exploring Student Perceptions of Academic Writing

In this section, I look closely at patterns that emerged from students' writing over the data collection period, and that also came out in interviews I conducted after students had completed my course. I wanted to examine the relationship I identified between the patterns that emerged from student essays and interviews. Like the data in Chapter Five, I selected the data I analyze here after initially reading through all of the written work students in two classes produced during the fall semester of 2012 (approximately 450 pieces of writing). My second pass was through the reflective essays and interview transcripts of the eight focal students I discuss in Chapters Three and Five. The third step of my analysis involved close reading of these essays and transcripts from the eight focal students described in Chapters Three and Five. I used two of Gee's (2014) building tasks,

which led me to identify three themes that represent how students perceive academic writing. The first task I used was building significance, or how language can be used to "render [things] significant or to lessen their significance, to signal to others how we view their significance" (p. 32). The second building task I used was sign systems and knowledge. Gee (2014) writes that "We can use language to make certain sign systems and certain forms of knowledge and beliefs relevant or privileged, or not, in given situations; that is, we can use language to build privilege or prestige for one sign system or way of knowing over another" (p. 35). In the following analysis, I show the ways in which students used language, in writing their reflective essays, and in discussing academic discourse with me in interviews, to demonstrate how they understand what it means to engage in academic discourse.

When I interviewed the eight focal students in my study about their writing, I asked them "how would you define academic writing?" Words and phrases that came up via my first pass through these responses included, "formal," "scholarly," "professional," "facts," "writing for school," "university writing," and "research" (Interviews). Susan said that academic writing involved "using big words," and "sounding smart" (Interview). John described academic writing as "statistics" (Interview). While all eight students were able to answer this question relatively quickly and easily, my next question proved more difficult for them to address.

I had brought to the interviews copies of all of the writing students had done for my classes, and I asked them to point to an example, in any of their papers, of what they considered to be academic writing. Six of the eight students I interviewed looked through their papers, but ultimately avoided pointing out specific instances of academic writing,

and instead described to me what they generally considered to be academic writing. For example, Jessica, Teresa, Paul, and Dylan told me that their final papers were examples of academic writing. Susan said that whether writing was considered academic or not depended on the topic, and also on whether or not research was required. John said that academic writing was determined by whether or not statistics were used. Only Alexa and Deborah pointed to specific examples in their papers, and both struggled to explain why they thought those examples constituted academic writing. Alexa pointed out the word "cognitive" from her final research paper. When I asked her what about that word stood out to her now as being evidence of academic, writing she could not tell me, and eventually she laughed and said "I don't know. I don't even know what it means" (Interview). Deborah pointed to a passage from one of her first essays in which she had used language out of the course textbook, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. When I asked why she chose that passage to point out, she said, "Well, it must be academic because it's from the book" (Interview).

I have organized most of the data I am discussing here in tables, so that the reader may be easily able to reference student responses and connect them to particular questions that I asked and themes I identified. Some students did not answer some questions, or did not do so in a way that "fit" within a theme. For example, here is the exchange Paul and I had when I asked him if he thought he used academic writing in his work:

Paul: Definitely. The final paper.

MS: The final paper? For my class?

Paul: Yeah.

MS: Ok, so you think the whole thing?

Paul: Yes. Basically everything led up . . . it was research that was stacked up upon each other and combined. (Interview)

In addition, there was, of course, some overlap in student responses between tables; that is, some answers have been placed in two different tables. For example, Jessica responded to my question about defining academic writing with, "It's more formal, I guess. Formalized. Not causal writing because even if you're not writing badly, there's still a formality that needs to be there in academic writing" (Interview). I have categorized this response as both focusing on formal writing, and as on comparing academic writing to other writing[23]. In the following three sections, I focus on the three themes students identified, and discuss them in terms of student learning of academic discourse.

Theme 1: Academic Writing is Performing for School

The first theme to emerge from my analysis is that several students characterized academic writing as writing that they do, or have done, for school. Susan begins her response with "learning to write professionally," but she presents that as a question, and then specifies that she is really referring to "university writing." Although she does follow the reference to "university writing" with "or whatever," the next portion of her response refers explicitly to "a creative writing course," which suggests that she is still equating academic writing to writing for school. Teresa begins her response by saying that she is "guessing," but in fact she gets directly to the point, saying that academic writing is used "in school, obviously," and that it is something that "only a student or

[23] I have put an extra space between certain utterances in the tables to indicate that they were not all part of one single response.

somebody that is in an academic world would understand." And Deborah describes academic writing in the context of teaching, as something that involves "teaching students, like myself, how to have a discussion on a scholarly level."

Table 6.1: Theme 1—Academic Writing is Performing for School

	How would you define academic writing?	Do you think you use academic writing in your work?
Susan	Learning how to write more professionally? Um, I notice that in university writing or whatever I don't ever really write like creative, I mean like short stories or poems or make up a non-fiction story that's never happened, or like unless I'm taking like a creative writing course, like it's all about structured essays and stuff like that, like it's more structured, it requires me to use big words that I usually don't use. Get out my thesaurus.	Scholarly resources, yeah. And in order to write a paper like this I had to read up on a lot of other papers, using scholarly sources, not Wikipedia. And incorporating that into my thought, like obviously I didn't know who this professor was and I had to read into him and include that in all this and all the information I got and citing all the sources and talking about how he published these books and this is why he is a credible source for this type of subject and stuff like that. That's school writing. Having to use scholarly sources and sound smart.
Teresa	I'm guessing it's language that's used mostly within situations, like, in school, obviously. I don't know how to explain it. I'm guessing it's language that has specific words that only a student or somebody that is in an academic world would understand.	I definitely feel I write differently when I'm writing for school than for other types of things. I try and make it more I guess professional.
Alexa	One, using proper grammar because you're in school you need to write better instead of texting language or internet language, making the distinction between the two.	I don't know, I kind of see academic language as like more intelligent words, I guess you would say? Like a higher level vocabulary. Like "cognitive." I don't really know what that means.

Table 6.1—continued

Deborah	I think it has to do with teaching students, like myself, how to have a discussion on a scholarly level. Teaching us how to maybe begin, or giving us maybe the steps and the information and to be able to say whatever it is we need to say effectively and logically, with a deeper understanding	I thought at the time that this was a section, what I was doing is I was referring to the, to a particular chapter in the *Ancient Rhetorics* textbooks. Do you remember that? 'Cause I thought that maybe I was finally relating to something that I found in the textbook that I could use in conjunction with what I was trying to say, as a comparison, and so I guess that's where I believe that I thought aha! Let me use this even though maybe I wasn't able to express it correctly, where it made sense.

For Susan, Teresa, and Deborah, academic writing is significant in that it is used and understood by a select group of individuals who are part of a particular community. It is writing that is done in a particular time and place, and for a particular audience. Alexa's response distinguishes school as a place for "proper grammar," for writing "better," and as a place where "texting language or internet language" are inappropriate.

All four of these students' responses posit that the kinds of knowledge and writing that are valued in school are different from the kinds of knowledge and writing that are valued in other venues. They suggest that academic literacy involves a performance that one puts on for other academics, and for teachers, a performance that involves language and tools (such as Susan's thesaurus and "scholarly resources") that are only used at school. Susan describes her own academic writing as having to "sound smart." Alexa admits to using a word she does not know the meaning of. Teresa says she tries to make her academic writing "more professional." And Deborah even describes a specific instance in her paper where she knew she was performing academic discourse by referencing the course textbook:

> I thought that maybe I was finally relating to something that I found in the textbook that I could use in conjunction with what I was trying to say, as a comparison, and so I guess that's where I believe that I thought aha! Let me use this even though maybe I wasn't able to express it correctly. (Interview)

This idea of performance is further borne out by student reflective essays. For example, in an excerpt of Deborah's third reflective essay for the class, she indicates that she is attempting to use rhetorical strategies in her writing, but is uncertain that she has been successful (students wrote the third reflective essay about the third *progymnasmata* assignment, which was the Introduction to Law)[24]:

> Reflective Essay 3 (10/31/2012):
>
> The rhetorical strategies I "tried" to use correctly, was use testimony by both local officials and their people, examples, maxims, a rhetorical question at the end followed by a peroration trying to arouse pity of sympathy because of the lives at risk. I begin the thesis with a narrative (statement of the case). I also tried to use narrative that reflects opposing point of view and a procedural narrative.[25]

Deborah's emphasis on what she tried to do indicates performance here because she did, in fact, use in her essay the rhetorical strategies she references (testimony, examples, maxims, a rhetorical question, and narrative are all rhetorical terms from the textbook that we had studied) but she was uncertain about how successful she was. Her reflection indicates that she was neither confident about using these strategies, nor about whether or not she did so correctly, but that she did use them, thus performing the academic discourse that she understood was required for the assignment.

[24] For the assignment prompt for Progymnasmata 3, see Appendix A.

[25] I have reproduced the text here exactly as Deborah wrote it.

Theme 2: Academic Writing is "Formal"

A second common theme that emerged from my analysis was the idea that academic writing is "formal." Jessica, Paul, and Dylan all described academic writing this way; in doing so, they indicate that they identify a certain hierarchy in writing, and that they perceive academic writing as privileging certain kinds of writing over others. I deliberately asked the question about defining academic writing as openly as I could, in hopes of not leading students to particular answers. Dylan was quick to answer, and quick to distinguish academic language from language one uses among friends. Jessica was a bit more hesitant in her response, and struggled a bit to come up with a definition. Ultimately, she juxtaposed "technology" with academic writing, suggesting that technology has led to "bad grammar and punctuation," which is in contrast to academic writing. And although when she says "not just that" she notes that academic writing is not only about grammar and punctuation, her use of "but" indicates that she is contrasting academic writing with writing that is associated with technology. Although Jessica does not define what she means by "formal" writing here, her response privileges and equates "formal" and "professional" writing, and disprivileges (Gee, 2014) "technology." Later in the response, Jessica juxtaposes "formalized" writing with "casual" writing, but also notes that "casual" writing can still be good writing (Interview).

Similarly, Paul says that academic writing can be about something "silly," but as long as it's "formal," and based on "good research and facts," it can still be academic. For Paul, academic writing is less about the topic and more about knowing how to spin the topic. He demonstrates that in his understanding, academic writing privileges research and facts, as well as formal language. He suggests that there is a continuum upon which

language can fall ("There's different degrees between formal and informal"), and that recognizing and using formal language are key to success in academic writing.

As I note above, there is a quality of uncertainty in Jessica's response, as if she has to build up to her definition of academic writing. She begins by referencing technology, and then grammar and punctuation, qualities that to a student, often seem to be essential to "good" writing. Once Jessica finds the word she is looking for, "formal," she repeats it or a variation of it four times in quick succession. It is not until the end of her response that she makes a declarative statement about how she would define academic writing: "It's more like formal, professional writing." Up until this point, most of her responses have been about what academic writing is not, and have included phrases of hesitation, such as "I think," and "I guess."

Jessica's response to my next questions further indicated her uncertainties about her understanding of academic writing. At this point in the interview, I asked Jessica if she thought she used academic writing in her work. She laughed and said, "Um, I try to. I mean, I guess, you tell me." I told her I thought she did, and then asked her to show me an example of academic writing in one of her papers. She told me she was nervous, and then began talking about "formal" writing again, saying, "hopefully I was successful in just really using that formal language and making it really make sense, and have like an appropriate tone, I think a lot of times, that's more believable to have that formality in your writing" (Interview).

Table 6.2: Theme 2—Academic Writing is "Formal"

	How would you define academic writing?	Do you think you use academic writing in your work?
Paul	I think of anything that can be made formal in writing. It can be something silly, but you can make it formal. Just through use of language and research. Like I could write a paper on My Little Pony and make it a metaphor for today's society. It could be formal, if you base it on good research and facts. There's different degrees between formal and informal.	
Dylan	Academic writing, I think it's formal writing. It's being formal, and not like you're talking to your friends.	For my Interior Design classes, I have to write justifications, these reflections, of what I was thinking, of my rationale, when I created something. And they have to be formal, they can't just be describing something. We have to think about why we did what we did, and we have to write about it in a formal way.
Jessica	I think especially now, with technology the way it is we have a tendency to have very bad grammar and punctuation and all of that not just that but that's a part of it. It's more formal, I guess. Formalized. Not causal writing because even if you're not writing badly, there's still a formality that needs to be there in academic writing. That's kind of what it means to me. It's more like formal, professional, writing.	It would probably be, like in my final paper. Probably in that. I was trying to, hopefully I was successful in just really using that formal language and making it really make sense, and have like an appropriate tone, I think a lot of times, that's more believable to have that formality in your writing.

Theme 3: Academic Writing vs. "Other" Writing

A third theme that appeared in student comments was that academic writing exists in contrast to other kind of writing. John was the most descriptive when it came not only to discussing academic writing in general, but also to talking about his own experiences with academic writing. He emphasized that to him, academic writing is a particular style, one that privileges certain kinds of language and information, over other kinds. He noted that academic writing must include "conclusions" and "data," that it must be "supported," and that it should contain "just the facts." Unlike other students I interviewed, such as Susan, John does not distinguish between academic and creative writing, but he does categorize the idea of creativity as being an aspect of style when he says, "it doesn't mean that it can't be creative in the way that it's expressed."

Of the eight students I interviewed, John had the most experience with different kinds of writing,[26] and expressed the most nuanced definition of academic writing. His initial definition of academic writing resisted comparing it to other kinds of writing, but when I asked him if he thought he used academic writing in his work, John initially described what academic writing cannot include, "you really have to take out emotive language. . . I always look it over to get all the emotive words . . . it can't be slanted" (Interview). Later, John talks again about the possibility of being creative in terms of style in academic writing, and again notes that there must be "facts" and "data."

Both Alexa and Susan also reference creativity when discussing academic writing, but they do so as a point of contrast. Alexa juxtaposes creative writing with "analytical" writing; when she does the former she "can make anything up," whereas

[26] As I noted in Chapter Five, John had written and self-published a novel, wrote for a blog, was in the process of writing a second novel, had done a lot of writing in his jobs, and was planning to go to graduate school for an M.F.A. in creative writing.

with the latter, she "need[s] the facts, need[s] sources, need[s] to prove something, like prove a point" (Interview). And Paul contrasts academic writing with "slang," suggesting that slang is never considered academic writing.

Table 6.3: Theme 3—Academic Writing vs. "Other" Writing

	How would you define academic writing?	Do you think you use academic writing in your work?
John	My understanding of academic writing would be a style of writing, a *style* (his emphasis) of writing that leaves out hyperbole, exaggeration, emotive language. It doesn't mean that it can't be creative in the way that it's expressed, but of course the conclusions and the data and all that stuff has to be supported by real science, or data. So, pretty much just the facts.	Yes. As a police officer you, you really have to take out emotive language. When you write up a report, also when I was in the Marine Corps I would write answers to Congress. One time I had a Colonel tell me that, "[John], you write angry. I want you to go home, think about it, and then look at it again tomorrow." After I got that piece of advice from the Colonel, I always look it over to get all the emotive words. And in police work you have to do that too. When you write that report, it can't be slanted in either way, so it has to be very, it has to be like Spock wrote it. I also write a blog for an online firearms and accessories retailer, and I write about gun shows and gun issues and a blog, while you want to be factual, you gotta get the model right, you gotta get the caliber right, you still want to be creative in the style of writing to that people are interested in reading the article. So it is in context. In police work, my academic writing would be very dry, and to the point. In a blog I'm still going to write academically in terms of the data's going to be accurate, but I'm going to be more creative in the language that I use.

Table 6.3—continued

Paul	There is definitely a fine line between slang, outright slang, and what might be considered a sentence.	
Alexa	With creative writing I feel like I can make anything up, like I don't have to use facts to back up what I'm saying, like it just comes straight from my imagination. Whereas analytical, I need the facts, I need sources, I need to prove something, like prove a point.	I try to. I don't know, I kind of see academic language as like more intelligent words, I guess you would say? Like a higher level vocabulary. Like "cognitive." That's not a word I'd use in creative writing.
Susan	Learning how to write more professionally? Um, I notice that in university writing or whatever I don't ever really write like creative, I mean like short stores or poems or make up a non-fiction story that's never happened, or like unless I'm taking like a creative writing course, like it's all about structured essays and stuff like that, like it's more structured, it requires me to use big words that I usually don't use. Get out my thesaurus.	

Conclusion: Reflections on Academic Discourse and Students' Reflective Writing

One of the challenges in trying to understand students' perceptions of academic discourse is that suggesting that students either "get" or "don't get" academic discourse oversimplifies writing, learning, and teaching. In addition, scholarship, as well as my own experience, suggests that students learn academic discourse over time, by performing it, by discussing it, by understanding it in terms of other kinds of writing, and by reflecting about it (see, for example, Bartholomae, 1986; Carroll, 2002; Herrington & Curtis, 2000; McCarthy, 1987; Sommers & Saltz, 2004). In an NCTE 2013 Policy Research brief, the authors note:

> Indeed, students who were explicitly taught metacognitive strategies in FYW [First-Year Writing]—along with writing strategies and genre awareness—

gradually shifted from parroting the language of the assignment (the prompt, the assigned readings, the teacher's handouts) during the earlier part of the semester toward taking control of the writing task by making nuanced decisions about audience, genre, and rhetorical choices. (p. 14)

To demonstrate an example of Deborah's emerging understanding of academic discourse, I have included excerpts from the four reflective essays she wrote over the course of the semester that she was in my class (one of these excerpts is also quoted above). The first three were written in class, while the fourth one was a longer essay students wrote outside of class.[27] As above, I have reproduced the text exactly as it was originally written. All four excerpts show Deborah's complete responses to the question "What rhetorical strategies did you use and why did you use them? (Cite examples from your essay.)":

Reflective Essay 1 (9/26/2012):

The rhetorical strategies I used in my paper were maxims and analogy's which were both used in the beginning of each thesis.

Reflective Essay 2 (10/9/2012):

Rhetorical strategies used were simple examples, policy examples, used throughout both thesis'.

Reflective Essay 3 (10/31/2012):

The rhetorical strategies I "tried" to use correctly, was use testimony by both local officials and their people, examples, maxims, a rhetorical question at the end followed by a peroration trying to arouse pity of sympathy because of the lives at

[27] For more details about when and how students wrote reflective essays, see Chapter Three and Appendix A.

risk. I begin the thesis with a narrative (statement of the case). I also tried to use narrative that reflects opposing point of view and a procedural narrative.

Reflective Essay 4 (12/5/2012):

The methods of proof I used included brief history examples . . . I used a maxim on page 2 quoting the American Red Cross. I used pathetic proofs: emotional appeals throughout the paper . . . I used stasis theory by giving facts of the problem and describing the issue of violating human rights after a natural disaster. I gave examples to elaborate the seriousness of the problem. I reported where I obtained my data and noted the scholarly sources which would qualify as reliable. (Interview)

Although Deborah never quite addresses why she used the particular rhetorical strategies she chose, her responses over the course of the semester show development both in terms of detail and confidence. Her early responses are brief and contain no references to the essay the reflection is about. By her third response, Deborah is beginning to elaborate on the strategies she used, and even begins to offer a brief explanation of why she used some of them ("to arouse pity of sympathy," to "reflect opposing point of view). By her fourth reflection, Deborah refers directly to her paper, describes how she used the various rhetorical strategies she did, and even defines one of the terms she uses (pathetic proofs), demonstrating her understanding of at least some of the discourse of the class.

As Deborah's acknowledgement of her struggles with the language of rhetoric indicate, academic discourse is complicated, and it takes time to learn. I am not suggesting that students should be able to effortlessly engage in academic discourse by the time they take College Writing II, nor am I suggesting that the performances I

describe above are not a crucial step in student learning. In fact, I believe that such performances are integral to learning such discourse. The challenge, however, lies in course outcomes. Students in College Writing II are, according to the course description, expected to have a certain facility with academic writing by the end of the course. Instructors are expected to assess this facility, as it is demonstrated in student expository and reflective essays. But if even successful students, as defined by their grades in the class and the assessments we report to the state, struggle to articulate their understanding of academic discourse, to what extent are instructors fulfilling the outcomes that have been set out for us?

As the excerpts from Deborah's reflective essays demonstrate, it took her a semester of practice to begin to use the academic discourse of College Writing II with some accuracy and confidence. It took repeated opportunities for her try out the language of the course in a series of comparatively low-stakes assignments. By the time she wrote her final, higher-stakes reflective essay,[28] Deborah was able to discuss with some sophistication the rationale behind the choices she had made in her writing.

In considering some of the implications of the analysis I conducted for this chapter, I return to the 2013 NCTE Policy Research brief. If colleges and universities are to expect students to acquire academic discourse, they need not only time to do so, but also opportunities for practice. Reflective strategies need to be both demonstrated and taught, and not just in First-Year Writing Programs. And students need to be given opportunities to talk about their reflective practices, so they can process and understand them. I further discuss these suggestions and implications in Chapter Seven.

[28] To reiterate, the first three reflective essays students wrote were not graded. I read them and commented on them, mostly in the form of asking questions. The fourth reflective essay was longer (2-3 pages), was written outside of class, and was graded.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary of Findings

This study grew out of my attempts to better understand the role of reflective writing in my students' academic lives. The first research question I set out to answer was what are students' perceptions of audience when they are engaging in reflective writing? As I discuss in Chapter Four, my initial attempts at uncovering answers to this question resulted in student responses that directed me to a different set of issues entirely. These issues pertained to how students perceived the institutional identity of Southwest State, to how they perceived my own identity as a representative of Southwest State, and to how their own identities were constructed by Southwest State. To try to understand the origins and implications of some of these perceptions, I analyzed the First-Year Writing Philosophy and Mission Statement, and the College Writing II Course Description, as these documents are the foundations upon which the courses are built.

My findings suggest that in a culture of assessment, students see every kind of writing they are asked to do as being high-stakes (Ross, 2014). They suggest that institutional documents that define and construct curricula can result in curricula that limit student learning, and create conditions in which well-prepared students succeed while less well-prepared students struggle at best, or fail, at worst.

In Chapter Five, I turn to a discussion of student perceptions of audience. Although audience can be a difficult concept for students, the students in this study tended to perceive reflective writing as offering them the opportunity to develop dynamic relationships with their readers. They saw reflection as a way to engage in a kind of

conversation with readers, and expected something in return from their readers. Ultimately, reflection was, for these students, about more than just writing another paper. Building on Ross' (2014) assertion that performance is and should be a valuable aspect of students' reflective activities, I suggest that the kinds of performances students engage in when they do reflective writing can create opportunities for them to have deeper, more complex understandings of the audiences for their writing, which in turn, can result in richer, more meaningful writing. In addition, I demonstrate that students are fully aware of the kinds of performances in which they are engaging, and that they use these performances to enhance their own learning.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I tried to answer the question in what way does reflective writing help students to develop fluency in the language of academic writing? The students in my study described academic discourse in one of three ways: as performance for school, as "formal" writing, and as a particular kind of writing that was different from "other" kinds of writing. The data suggested that learning academic discourse takes time and practice, and that reflective writing can provide both if it is taught with intention and care. In addition, the data I analyzed demonstrated examples of the ways in which reflective writing allowed students to explore their understandings of academic discourse, as well as another forum in which they could engage in conversation with me (Latta & Lauer, 2000; O'Neill, 1998).

Since I conducted the study (during the 2012-2013 academic year) I write about in this dissertation, I have experimented with different kinds of reflective writing, and even stopped asking my students to do reflective writing for periods of time. I find that I always return to reflective writing, however, because it offers me the opportunity to learn

about my students. For example, they tell me if they are excited about their work, or proud of it, and also if they are disappointed in it. They describe the ways their experiences and knowledge have worked together to produce learning (Kathpalia & Heah, 2008). They tell me what was particularly challenging for them, or what they thought was easy. They tell me why they did not do an assignment, or why they only did part of it. Sometimes, as in Deborah's case, they tell me things they would not in other contexts. All of this information gives me insight that helps me to better understand my students, which helps me to be a better teacher.

In the process of conducting this study, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on my own pedagogical practices, and have analyzed what my students are doing in response to my teaching. In turn, I have learned a great deal about how some of the strategies I am required to use to teach writing work. After four years of teaching the curriculum I describe in this dissertation, I have come to recognize that although the ways students demonstrate their learning will not always align with the rubrics I am expected to use, they are still learning. And I have realized that although most students will not be fluent in academic discourse when they finish the College Writing courses, they will at least be more willing to try academic discourse, and more confident in their approaches to doing so.

Because reflective writing assignments in First-Year Writing programs are common, and because most college students are required to take First-Year Writing classes, I believe this study of student perceptions of reflective writing has significant findings for First-Year Writing instructors and Writing Program Administrators. In addition, I believe that this research is valuable for the way it considers, via a

combination of reflection on my own teaching and an analysis of my students' work and voices, the extent to which certain writing-related pedagogical practices result in student learning.

Just as I gained confidence in my abilities to teach the First-Year Writing curriculum, it changed, though the philosophy and mission that inform it have not. I began teaching at Southwest State in 2011; since then, the First-Year Writing Program has had three different directors. From 2014-2015, the director that created the program I discuss in this dissertation was replaced on an interim basis by a Senior Lecturer[29] who had been serving as the program's Assistant Director. In May, 2015, I learned that a new director would be taking over this program. In early August, instructors received a 42-page handbook, written by the new director, detailing the new curriculum for College Writing I and II. All of the assignments are new, and the structure of the class is different, though we are required to continue to use the most recent (2012) edition of *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* (though we learned at orientation that the textbook will change beginning Fall 2016[30]), and still have a limited list of secondary texts to choose from. I describe these differences here because I believe they indicate one example of the ways in which writing programs are increasingly under pressure to increase assessment with the aim to demonstrate measurable student outcomes.

[29] At Southwest State, lecturers are non-tenure-track faculty who may have one, three, or five year contracts, depending on their rank (Lecturer or Senior Lecturer) and their department. Lecturers have 4/4 teaching loads, are expected to engage in service for their departments, and can choose, but are not required, to also devote time to research.

[30] We also learned that the primary reason the current textbook was being kept for another year was because the Director had struck a deal with the publisher. As I noted in Chapter Four, The First-Year Writing Program has been running on a budget of $900.00 per year. The new director told us that Pearson, the publisher of *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, had offered the program a substantial amount of money if instructors required students to purchase the electronic version of the textbook, which costs about $140.00. We have told the money will be used in "ways that will benefit" us.

First-Year Writing at Southwest State in 2015

There are four primary differences between the newest and the previous version[31] of the First-Year Composition Program: the nature of the assignments, the emphasis on revision, the reflective assignments, and the requirement that students complete a portfolio that they submit at the end of the semester.[32] The Program Mission statement and the College Writing course descriptions (the texts I analyze in Chapter Four) feature early in the handbook; these documents continue to be the foundation upon which the courses are built, and thus continue to inform many of the details of the course curriculum.

In the current iteration of College Writing II, students no longer complete *progymnasmata* exercises (Encomium/Invective, Confirmation/Refutation, Introduction of Law) and a research paper. Instead, they have five units, beginning with an "Argument Description," followed by an "Argumentative Synthesis," and then a "Genre Analysis." The fourth unit is a "wildcard unit," which means instructors can design their own unit assignment, though we are required to write a proposal for the unit that must be approved by the program director. Information in the handbook pertaining to this assignment points out that it "is not an opportunity to teach students how to conduct the analysis of literary texts," and that proposals must "include an outline of pedagogical assumptions, instructional goals, and questions for consideration." Unit five consists of a portfolio and an "Executive Summary." The portfolio must contain the Executive Summary, revised essays from units one through four, and a collection of "representative (cited) writing development documents." In addition to these assignments, students are required to write

[31] The previous version is the class in which I collected my data for this dissertation.

[32] See Appendix F for the specific assignments and rubric for the current version of the course.

regularly in a *hupomnemata*, a small book that they are expected to carry with them and use to record ideas, thoughts, and experiences they have. They also do regular in-class writings in these books. The course handbook suggests that the *hupomnemata* "should provide students with a space to begin testing the initial arguments that they will elaborate in the final portfolio."

The most significant changes between the current and previous versions of College Writing II pertain to revision and reflection. Previously, we were encouraged to incorporate opportunities for revision into the class, but were not required to do so. In the current class, students are required to revise at least once all of their essays from units one through four. Once students have turned in the initial essay for a unit, instructors grade it and return it to students. Students then write a revision memo that responds to instructors' questions and comments on the essay. Instructors read and mark revision memos as complete or incomplete; once a student has received a complete on her revision memo, she must revise the essay. If students do not complete all three elements of the unit (an essay, a revision memo, and a revised essay) they get a zero for the unit.

Revision memos (and the final executive summary) have replaced the reflective essays that instructors were encouraged to assign in the previous version of the class. When we respond to and evaluate essays, we are to resist making line-by-line comments, and are to focus instead on responding in the form of questions that quote specific lines from the essay we are grading. We are to write all questions by hand, at the end of the essay. Revision memos that students write in response to these comments contain elements of reflection, in that they must include a summary that reflects on how the instructor's comments suggest opportunities for learning to write more effectively,

detailed responses to the instructor's written questions, and a specific plan for improving the essay.

The handbook instructors received last summer contains detailed and lengthy assignment prompts for units one, two, three, and five, revision memos, and the *hupomnemata*. It also includes instructions for how to write the proposal for unit four, a rubric to guide our assessments of all of the units, and information about how we are to conduct assessment of student work. Although instructors were told that we are not required to use the assignment prompts as they are printed in the handbook, we were also told that if we did, should any complaints from students arise, the director would be better able to speak on our behalf because he would be aware of exactly what we were doing in the classroom. Formatting and submission of student assignments have also been stipulated to us in the handbook. Essays must be submitted in hard copy only, must be typed in 10-point, Times New Roman font, and must be single spaced.

The language of business pervades the reflective assignment documents in the new course, as if "memos" and "executive summaries" might provide an antidote to the problems scholars have associated with reflection (see, for example Conway, 1994; Schendel & O'Neill, 1999; Emmons, 2003; Orland-Barak, 2005; Kinsella, 2009; Jensen, 2010; Jung, 2011). In his explanation of his reasoning behind requiring "revision memos" and "executive summaries" in place of reflective essays, the new director offers his own critique of reflective writing. He writes:

> An executive portfolio summary is an argument driven essay that explains the contents of the portfolio to someone who was not privy to the complexity of the revision process that led to its production. The tendency with this type of genre

> (especially because it has historically been cast as a "reflective" essay) is to appeal to the instructor's expertise in teaching writing or to characterize the process of growth as a kind of confessional. Neither approach is ever successful because it focuses more on the process of feeling one has learned rather than on tracking and analyzing the evidence of one's learning. (Southwest State WPA Handbook, 2015).

The suggestion that student reflections are focused more on "feeling one has learned" than on "tracking and analyzing" learning not only diminishes the important writing students might do in reflective writing, but it also suggests that the purpose of reflection is associated with particular measurable outcomes. It suggests that the reflective essays that students wrote in the past were little more than attempts to please instructors, and implies that there is little value, for either students or teachers, in "confessional" writing, or in "feeling one has learned."

As I discuss in Chapters Four and Five, there were times when I was frustrated with the lack of analysis that I believed I saw in student reflective essays, and when a surface reading of such essays might indicate that they were, indeed, little more than confessionals. Closer analysis of these essays, however, combined with discussions with students about them, demonstrates that "reflective" essays can allow for and show real learning, such as learning academic discourse, and learning about audience. In addition, the students I describe in this project show that reflective writing encouraged them to consider self-reflection a life-long process (Watson, 2000).

Although I do not agree with the new director's outright dismissal of reflective writing that I cite above, I do recognize the pressure he is under from university

administrators, students, parents, and the State. During August orientation he explained that currently, among scholars of Composition pedagogy, portfolios and genre studies have particular currency. In 2010, the current Director published a lengthy article that is staunchly critical of portfolios for the ways in which, he contends, they both conceal and enact pedagogical discipline. He acknowledged this during orientation, but explained that because of this currency of portfolios, and also because they provide tangible data that can be collected and assessed, he was changing the course to include a portfolio requirement.

Directions for Future Research

This study is limited to presenting my own experiences, as well as those of my students, in one particular class at one particular institution, during one particular academic year. There are a number of additional questions and concerns my study raises about reflective writing and First-Year Writing courses. Some of these questions and concerns include the following:

• Both Susan and John told me that they felt as though they had continued and would continue to use reflective practices that they had learned in my class. I wonder if other students have found, later in their academic and/or professional careers, that they too return to these practices. This leads to my first question, which is to what extent, and how, do students continue to use reflective practices they learn in First-Year Writing courses later, both in college and beyond?

• If, as the NCTE (2013) Policy Research Brief on First-Year Writing suggests, student processes of meta-awareness of their learning and facility with academic discourse

develop over time, how can writing instruction and reflective practices be integrated more fully into college curricula to extend beyond first-year courses?

• All of my students were very concerned about whether or not reflective essays would be graded, and many were unhappy when they discovered that the fourth reflective essay would be assessed. I was not required to inform students that the fourth essay would not only be assessed in the context of College Writing II, but also for the State (though I did tell them this). If reflective writing continues to prevail in writing courses (as I believe it should), we must consider the pedagogical and ethical implications of assessing reflection, particularly when students are often unaware that such assessments are occurring. In addition, as Latta and Lauer (2000) note, instructors and Writing Program Administrators must consider the reasons we ask students to engage in reflection, and we should be open and honest with students about how their reflective writing will be used. If, as Jensen (2010) notes, asking students to reflect on their work runs the risk of forcing institutional agendas of power on them, we must question why and how we want to engage students in processes of reflection.

• In my current class, I ask students to reflect in their *hupomnemata*. In spite of the fact that I will not read these reflections, which I have explained, students constantly ask me what I "want them to write." This leads to the next questions teachers must consider about reflection: Is it ever possible to ask students to reflect without implying they are being surveilled? And what kinds of power dynamics come into to play when we do ask students to reflect?

• When Susan and I were talking before I interviewed her, we discussed some of the cultural differences she finds between student-teacher relationships in Korea and student-

teacher relationships in the U.S. This discussion led me to consider how gender and cultural background might influence reflective writing, another area that would benefit from further research.

Implications for Teachers, Administrators, and Students

Based on the data I have collected and analyzed, I believe instructors, administrators, and students need to look more closely at course descriptions, outcomes statements, philosophy and mission statements, and the various documents that inform and define First-Year Writing Programs. These documents are almost always available on college and university websites, and as Saichaie and Morphew note, such sites are seen by "upwards of 84% of prospective students" (p. 500). These documents have the power to define the identities of the participants in these programs (who are primarily students and instructors), and these identities should be scrutinized for the ways in which they construct students and teachers.

In addition, there is the widely-held expectation that once students complete their First-Year Writing courses, they will be able to confidently execute academic discourse, as if the First-Year course should prepare them to succeed at writing in any other discipline. But acquiring academic discourse takes time, and involves practice and failure. But in higher education, students have little opportunity to practice and fail, particularly given the current culture of assessment, and the ever-increasing cost of college degrees. Since I began teaching, I have experienced the pressure that First-Year Writing programs are under to "prove" their success. State assessment requirements have increased university-wide, and the skills and abilities we are to assess have become increasingly specific.

But in the process of conducting assessments and constructing identities, student voices get lost. Administrators and legislators determine what students should learn, and how they should learn it, and require that objective assessments measure subjective experiences. In the end, we must respond to and understand the voices of our students, and we must support them as they work to position and reposition themselves as writers. We must allow them to talk back, and value what they have to teach us. We must encourage them to share their experiences and perceptions of their learning, and to tell us not only what they know, but also how they know it.

APPENDIX A

COLLEGE WRITING II ASSIGNMENTS AND RUBRICS (2012)

I have included the assignments and corresponding rubrics for College Writing II. These prompts and rubrics were written by the Director of the Writing Program in 2011.

PG 1: Encomium/Invective Prompt

Encomiums and invectives are exercises that cast praise (encomia) or blame (invective) on a particular person, place, or idea. For this assignment, you will write both a declaration of praise and a declaration of blame against a particular person or event that has had a significant effect on the topic you have chosen for this course. The thesis and premises of your logic will be particularly important to this exercise. Make sure that you are giving careful attention to the probability of your claims and supporting all assertions with logical evidence. Each exercise needs to be about 400 words in length.

Example:

Topic: Looking at the consequences of video games in contemporary American culture

Audience: Southwest State students.

Purpose: Persuade readers that the Media Library is not fulfilling its mission when it rents video games to students.

Thesis: The Southwest State Media Library deserves blame for renting video games because the purpose of a library should be to promote education and learning rather than entertainment and violence.

and

Topic: Looking at the consequences of video games in contemporary American culture

Audience: Southwest State students.

Purpose: Persuade readers that the Media Library's renting of video games to students is beneficial.

Thesis: The Southwest State Media Library deserves to be commended for renting video games because the purpose of a library should be to promote learning, and certain video games help people to learn and think critically.

PG 1: Encomium/Invective Rubric

Encomium/Invective (ARCS Ch. 5: Logical Proof)	**Points Value**	**Objectives Met**
Rhetorical Purpose	10%	EEO 2
Develops an opinion, theme, or line of thought relevant to writer's purpose and appropriate to writer's audience		
Rhetorical Method: Logical Proof	40%	EEO 1
Argues for probabilities that an audience will likely accept by making claims that are supported by methods of logical proof. These methods must include at least two of the following types of logical proofs: enthymemes; rhetorical, historical, and fictional examples; analogies; maxims; and signs		
Skillfully uses inductive logic or deductive logic (reasoning) to construct and organize the writer's argument		
Appeals to readers' logic by inventing major and minor premises that are likely to be widely accepted and are not deliberately false		
Writing Strategies: Thesis	30%	
Engages with audience by asserting an arguable thesis, one which • seeks to establish what is probable rather than what is certain • attempts to persuade through reasoning instead of trying to establish scientific fact or to record the writer's personal feelings about the topic		
Provides clear logical structure by establishing the most important premises of the argument in thesis statement(s)		
Uses clear and precise language in order to narrow the scope of the central argument, avoiding statements that are		

too vague, abstract, unqualified, or disconnected from the writer's topic		
Invented ethos: grammar, mechanics, spelling, and syntax	10%	EEO 3
Communicates with appropriate clarity and coherency; demonstrates control of language and paragraph conventions		
Organization/ Arrangement	10%	EEO 1
Moves readers through the essay fluidly, without producing confusion, by using appropriate divisions, effective transitions, and sufficient paragraph and sentence cues		
Holds the readers' attention through the essay through use of logical and/or emotional cues, as well as examples, narration, and detail where appropriate		
Reflective Analysis	---	EEO 2
Helps readers understand writer's choices in selecting which topic to address; what purpose the writer has in writing; what kinds of rhetorical strategies to use and where to use them; what audience values to target; how to arrange and organize the writing; and what writing strategies to use in order to make the writing most persuasive, informative and/or entertaining. Supports all analysis with appropriate detail and examples from writer's work		

PG 2: Confirmation/Refutation Prompt

The confirmation and refutation exercise offers you a chance to begin exploring the particular ways that your chosen topic is supported and positioned in policies and arguments. You will need to compose a confirmation *and* a refutation for this exercise, both of which focus on arguments or assertions that are current and relevant to your chosen topic. Your exercises should make particular use of stasis theory in order to decide on which aspects of the assertion are most important to support and what other arguments you should anticipate and address. *Each of the two exercises should be approximately 300 words*. Remember that these exercises should help develop ideas that you will expand in your final Action Essay for this course. Choose the assertions you will refute and confirm carefully, and do your research to find how you can begin to anticipate other arguments.

I encourage you to carefully review the rubric for this assignment before you begin writing, while you are writing, and after you have finished writing (but before you turn in your final paper).

Topic: Looking at the consequences of video games in contemporary American culture.

PG 2: Confirmation/Refutation Rubric

Confirmation/Refutation (ARCS Ch.3: Stasis Theory)	**Points Value**	**Objectives Met**
Rhetorical Purpose	10%	EEO 2
Develops an opinion, theme, or line of thought relevant to writer's purpose and appropriate to writer's audience		
Rhetorical Method: STASIS THEORY	40%	EEO 1
Successfully navigates an appropriate level of generality by framing the chosen topic as a theoretical or practical issue		
Settles on an identified point of stasis by providing a reasonable and persuasive way for readers to understand		

what is at stake with regard to the chosen issue		
Uses stasis theory effectively to engage counterarguments that address other ways of approaching the writer's topic (i.e., other stasis questions); demonstrates awareness of other interests related to the writer's topic		
Writing Strategies: ANTICIPATING COUNTERARGUMENTS	30%	
Anticipates other points of view by demonstrating hospitable tone towards audience values, expectations, beliefs, concerns, feelings, and existing knowledge		
Writer addresses potential objections and counterarguments through one or more of the following strategies of counterargument: • direct acknowledgment, drawing attention to aspects of the topic that demonstrate the writer's full exploration of the issues involved • modification, demonstrating a willingness to adjust and refine an argument in order to accommodate strong objections • refutation, showing careful attention to the shared concerns that make one method of proof more urgent or more relevant than others		
Invented ethos: grammar, mechanics, spelling, and syntax	10%	EEO 3
Communicates with appropriate clarity and coherency; demonstrates control of language and paragraph conventions		
Organization/ Arrangement	10%	EEO 1
Moves readers through the essay fluidly, without producing confusion, by using appropriate divisions, effective transitions, and sufficient paragraph and sentence cues		
Holds the readers' attention through the essay through use of logical and/or emotional cues, as well as examples, narration, and detail where appropriate		
Reflective Analysis	---	EEO 2
Helps readers understand writer's choices in selecting which topic to address; what purpose the writer has in writing; what kinds of rhetorical strategies to use and where to use them; what audience values to target; how to arrange and organize the writing; and what writing strategies to use in order to make the writing most persuasive, informative and/or entertaining. Supports all		

analysis with appropriate detail and examples from writer's work		

PG 3: Introduction of Law Prompt

The final *Progymnasmata* exercise asks you to attack or defend a specific law that is timely and relevant to your topic for the course. This longer exercise (at least 500 words) requires you to use extrinsic proofs *and* the other rhetorical strategies we have been studying in order to support your claim for why the particular law should be justified or repealed. Think carefully about how data, facts, and the testimony of authorities might be used strategically to influence your readers for or against your cause. All extrinsic proofs should be attributed and qualified in your writing. Overall, you should use this exercise to prepare for the research-based action essay that will be our final project for this course.

Topic: Looking at the consequences of video games in contemporary American culture.

Thesis: A California law banning the violent sale of video games to minors was justly struck down by the Supreme Court. Had the law gone into effect, it would have violated the freedom of individuals to choose their own standards of entertainment, and it would have been a costly mistake to enact.

PG 3: Introduction of Law Rubric

Introduction of Law (ARCS Ch. 8: Extrinsic Proofs)	**Points Value**	**Objectives Met**
Rhetorical Purpose	10%	EEO 2
Develops an opinion, theme, or line of thought relevant to writer's purpose and appropriate to writer's audience		
Rhetorical Method: Extrinsic Proofs	40%	EEO 1
Supports invented premises of argument (emotional, logical, and ethical) by including relevant data, testimony, and appeals to authorities		
Maintains clarity by connecting all proofs to relevant premises		
Seeks goodwill of audience by ensuring that proofs are effective, authoritative, well-defined, carefully evaluated for accuracy		

Writing Strategies: Providing Support and Examples	30%	
Supports logical claims by providing support and examples that are appropriate to the writer's argument and effective in persuading audience to accept the writer's premises		
Shows evidence of careful research and invention by making sure all appeals to authorities, including quotations from outside sources and testimony from authoritative figures, are credible, qualified, persuasive, and appropriately attributed		
Demonstrates attention to readers' character by selecting support and examples that are engaging and appealing to readers		
Invented ethos: grammar, mechanics, spelling, and syntax	10%	EEO 3
Communicates with appropriate clarity and coherency; demonstrates control of language and paragraph conventions		
Organization/ Arrangement	10%	EEO 1
Moves readers through the essay fluidly, without producing confusion, by using appropriate divisions, effective transitions, and sufficient paragraph and sentence cues		
Holds the readers' attention through the essay through use of logical and/or emotional cues, as well as examples, narration, and detail where appropriate		
Reflective Analysis	---	EEO 2
Helps readers understand writer's choices in selecting which topic to address; what purpose the writer has in writing; what kinds of rhetorical strategies to use and where to use them; what audience values to target; how to arrange and organize the writing; and what writing strategies to use in order to make the writing most persuasive, informative and/or entertaining. Supports all analysis with appropriate detail and examples from writer's work		

Research-based Action Essay Part 1 Prompt: Audience Profile

This part of your final project for English 1320 is a sophisticated analysis of the audience and purpose of the project. This analysis needs to explain *why* there is an exigent need for the kind of action you are proposing, *who* will be invested in the project, and *how* the course of action recommended will impact the audience. The justification for the audience and purpose of the essay should be grounded in your experiences in "inventing" academic arguments over the course of the semester using strategies of stasis theory, logical appeals, and extrinsic proofs. The profile may be turned in as a proposal for the larger "invention" part of the project. The profile itself will be a significant (but not the only) component of your assessment for the project; this part of the essay should be 650-975 words in length (a minimum of 650 words is required for full credit).

Here are some of the things that your essay *must* do:

- •Acknowledge an academic audience by identifying and justifying audience values and expectations
- •Consider audience habits and expectations by providing details learned through observations, experience, and research
- •Explain choices for forms and conventions likely to appeal to an academic audience by providing references to other existing texts and examples currently or historically valued by an audience
- •Justify the writer's unique approach to the Research-based Action Essay by outlining writing strategies and methods of proof most likely to appeal to the expectations of the particular audience
- •Use grammar, mechanics, spelling, and syntax appropriately and logically
- •Arrange paragraphs, sentences, arguments, and claims carefully

Research-based Action Essay Part 2 Prompt: Invention

The Research-based Action Essay is the capstone writing project for English 1320. For this assignment, you must complete a well-researched, rhetorically sophisticated textual argument. In order to complete this project, you will need to draw on all of the rhetorical strategies that you have been studying in the course. Your goal for the project is to both *expose* a problem and to lay out a researched *course of action* for an audience invested in the problem to follow. The Action Essay has three parts: 1) An analysis of the audience and purpose of the project; 2) Second, invention—the Action Essay itself; 3) Third, critical reflection on the scope and limitations of the Action Essay. You will receive more information about part 3 later; this assignment sheet will focus on part 2.

The Action Essay is a research paper that should ultimately propose a recommended course of action about a topic of interest to you—*in other words, this paper is not a report, but a carefully constructed and well-supported argument about an issue*. In creating this Action Essay, you will need to think carefully about the audience and purpose for the essay, considering what proofs and premises an audience is likely to find appealing as well as what kinds of alternative courses of action or definitions of the problem the audience might be inclined to consider. The essay itself will be a significant (but not the only) component of your assessment for the project; this part of the essay should be 8-10 pages (8 pages minimum, not including the references or any title pages, images, etc.) in length, and should use 8-10 scholarly sources. At least 5 of the sources you use must be print sources.

Here are some of the elements that your essay must contain:

- A clear thesis that is arguable and authoritative

- A recommended course of action appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose
- A course of action that is situated within the values, beliefs, and expectations that are most relevant and persuasive to your audience
- Demonstrated awareness of other points of view and courses of action
- Support and examples from a variety of sources
- Correctly cited and contextualized sources
- Topics, details, and claims that are relevant and interesting to your audience
- Clearly articulated, relevant rhetorical strategies (stasis theory, logical proof, extrinsic proof)
- Appropriate and strategic use of grammar, mechanics, spelling and syntax
- Careful arrangement of paragraphs, sentences, arguments, and claims

Research-based Action Essay Part 3 Prompt: Reflective Analysis

Your final paper for this class consists of a reflective analysis of your experiences writing your Research Action Essay. The essay should do the following:

- Help the reader understand your choices in selecting:
    - the particular issues you addressed from your larger topic
    - what argument you made about the issues and why
    - what course of action you advocate being taken
    - what kinds of rhetorical strategies you used and where you used them
    - discuss how you used stasis theory, logical proofs, and extrinsic proofs to make your argument clear and convincing
    - what audience values you targeted
    - how you decided to arrange and organize the essay

• what writing strategies you decided to emphasize to make your writing persuasive/informative/entertaining.

Research-Based Action Essay Rubric

Research-Based Action Essay	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Falls Below Standard	Falls Far Below Standard
Audience Profile	Provides extensive, relevant details about beliefs, habits, and expectations of desired audience for project.	Provides some details about beliefs, habits, and expectations of desired audience for project. Most, but not all details are relevant.	Provides few details about beliefs, habits, and expectations of desired audience for project. Many details are not relevant.	Does not provide details about beliefs, habits, and expectations of desired audience.
	Convinces reader that writer understands forms and conventions valued by audience.	Mostly convinces reader that writer understands forms and conventions valued by audience.	Leaves reader in doubt about how well writer understands forms and conventions valued by audience.	Does not convince reader that writer understands forms and conventions valued by audience.
Action Essay--Purpose	Recommends a course of action that strongly appeals to writer's topic, audience, and purpose. Shows clear acknowledgement of audience values and expectations.	Recommends a course of action that wavers in appeal to writer's topic, audience, and purpose. Shows some acknowledgement of audience values and expectations.	Recommends a course of action that mostly does not appeal to writer's topic, audience, and purpose. Shows little acknowledgement of audience values and expectations.	Does not recommend a course of action that strongly appeals to writer's topic, audience, and purpose. Does not show acknowledgement of audience values and expectations.
Action Essay—Rhetorical Strategies	Makes a logical, balanced, and well-supported argument using stasis theory, logical proofs, and extrinsic proofs.	Makes an argument that lacks logic, balance, or support in places. Shows difficulty using either stasis theory, logical proofs, or extrinsic proofs.	Makes an argument that severely lacks logic, balance, and support throughout the writing. Shows profound difficulty using stasis theory, logical proofs, and extrinsic proofs	Does not attempt to make a logical, balanced, and well-supported argument. Shows little ability to use stasis theory, logical proofs, and extrinsic proofs.
Action Essay—Writing Strategies	Argument is noticeably and effectively strengthened by writer's careful attention to thesis statements, counterarguments, and supporting details and examples.	Argument is strengthened in places by writer's careful attention to thesis statements, counterarguments, and supporting details and examples.	Argument is not strengthened by writer's careful attention to thesis statements, counterarguments, and supporting details and examples.	Argument shows little or no attention to thesis statements, counterarguments, and supporting details and examples.

Invented Ethos (grammar, spelling, syntax, and citations)	Establishes a positive and accomplished writerly ethos through skillful, creative, and audience-appropriate choices in grammar, syntax, spelling, and diction. Writer shows strong control of language conventions and writing is almost entirely free of mistakes.	Establishes a competent writerly ethos through skillful, creative, and audience-appropriate choices in grammar, syntax, spelling, and diction. Writer shows control of language conventions and writing is mostly free of mistakes.	Establishes a slightly negative writerly ethos through inappropriate choices in grammar, syntax, spelling, and diction. Writer shows difficulty controlling language conventions and writing is marked by frequent mistakes.	Establishes a negative writerly ethos through inappropriate choices in grammar, syntax, spelling, and diction. Writer shows significant difficulty controlling language conventions, and writing is very difficult to read because of mistakes.
Organization/ Arrangement	Captivates reader's attention throughout the writing. Uses strong, well-balanced paragraphs and sentences. Writer skillfully employs strategies such as transitions, divisions, and logical and emotional cues to move reader through the argument.	Mostly holds reader's attention throughout the writing. Uses paragraphs and sentences adequately. Writer competently employs strategies such as transitions, divisions, and logical and emotional cues to move reader through the argument.	Mostly does not hold reader's attention throughout the writing. Some paragraphs and sentences are used inadequately. Writer shows difficulty employing strategies such as transitions, divisions, and logical and emotional cues to move reader through the argument.	Does not hold reader's attention throughout the writing. Uses paragraphs and sentences inadequately. Writer does not use strategies such as transitions, divisions, and logical and emotional cues to move reader through the argument.
Rhetorical Purpose	Makes clear, coherent and convincing argument for writer's strategic use of rhetorical practices in inventing a course of action appropriate to the intended academic audience. Provides consistent, close analysis of writer's choices.	Makes argument for writer's strategic use of rhetorical practices in inventing a course of action appropriate to the intended academic audience, but argument lacks clarity and/or coherency in places. Provides analysis of writer's choices, but analysis lacks in detail or consistency.	Shows difficulty making a clear and coherent argument for writer's strategic use of rhetorical practices in inventing a course of action appropriate to the intended academic audience. Attempts to analyze writer's choices, but does not provide close or consistent analysis.	Does not make argument for writer's strategic use of rhetorical practices in inventing a course of action appropriate to the intended academic audience. Does not provide analysis of writer's choices.
Evidence of Writing Strategies	Uses ample and effective evidence from writer's action essay, audience	Uses some evidence from writer's action essay, audience analysis, and	Uses little evidence from writer's action essay, audience analysis, and	Makes little or no attempt to use evidence from writer's action

and Rhetorical Methods	analysis, and invention plans. Strongly convinces readers of writer's ability to use rhetorical methods and writing strategies skillfully.	invention plans. Mostly convinces readers of writer's ability to use rhetorical methods and writing strategies skillfully.	invention plans. Leaves readers in doubt about of ability to use rhetorical methods and writing strategies skillfully.	essay, audience analysis, and invention plans. Does not convince readers of writer's ability to use rhetorical methods and writing strategies skillfully.

APPENDIX B

GOALS AND OUTCOMES FOR COLLEGE WRITING II

revised 2012, Fall

1. GOAL 1: STUDENTS WILL WRITE TEXTS THAT RESPOND MEANINGFULLY TO IMPORTANT ISSUES IN ACADEMIC CONTEXTS

1.1. Students will understand the forms, conventions, and styles and genres expected by academic and nonacademic audiences

1.1.1. Students will describe the conventions, genres, and expectations used by writers in multiple academic disciplines

1.1.2. Students will compare academic conventions and genres with non-academic conventions and genres

1.1.3. Students will explain how writers in different academic and nonacademic contexts use different rhetorical strategies

1.1.4. Students will describe the values and expectations of the specific audiences that they intend to reach in their writing

1.2. Students will use invention strategies to create appropriate, relevant, and compelling written content

1.2.1. Students will identify the invention strategies of stasis theory, logical proof, and extrinsic proof

1.2.2. Students will explain how each strategy can be used to produce relevant arguments about important national and international issues

1.2.3. Students will appeal specifically to the values of academic audiences using the invention strategies of stasis, logical proof, and extrinsic proof

1.2.4. Students will try out different rhetorical strategies (*copia*) in order to reach different academic and nonacademic audiences

1.3. Students will arrange texts so that they keep audiences interested and meet the expectations of the rhetorical situation

1.3.1. Students will captivate readers' attention using effective transitions, clear divisions, and engaging logical and emotional cues.

1.3.2. Students will appeal to audiences' expectations of balanced, well-crafted paragraphs and sentences

1.4. Students will employ proven writing strategies to create clear, fluid, and relevant persuasive texts

1.4.1. Students will use the strategy of anticipating counterarguments to address other points of view and perspectives

1.4.2. Students will use strong thesis statements to establish clear and consistent positions in written arguments

1.4.3. Students will use relevant examples and other methods of support to qualify and strengthen their arguments

1.5. Students will develop a writerly "ethos" to meet expected conventions, grammars, and genres

1.5.1. Students will choose audience-appropriate grammar, syntax, spelling, and diction to establish a positive and accomplished writerly ethos

1.5.2. Students will use established genres and conventions in order to appeal to audience needs

1.5.3. Students will write with grammar and syntax appropriate to the rhetorical situation and audience

1.5.4. Students will use relevant sources to enhance logos and establish credibility

1.6. Students will write texts that effectively persuade academic audiences

1.6.1. Students will practice writing persuasively by composing Progymnasmata exercises

1.6.2. Students will recommend a course of action relevant to a specific national/international problem and justify the invention and arrangement of their argument

1.7. Students will revise their writing to incorporate feedback and response

1.7.1. Students will read and respond to one another's writing

1.7.2. Students will incorporate feedback from other writers in revisions of their own writing

1.7.3. Students will identify and explain their own revision habits

1.8. Students will demonstrate understanding of their own rhetorical choices and writing habits

1.8.1. Students will reflect critically on how they invent, arrange, and style the texts they produce

1.8.2. Students will argue persuasively for the relevance and effectiveness of their own rhetorical choices

1.8.3. Students will identify their rhetorical choices as evidence of ethical decision making

1.8.4. Students will explain the issues/problems most relevant to their identified audiences and will provide evidence to support their critical thinking about the audience and context for their writing

2. GOAL 2: STUDENTS WILL THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT ACADEMIC WRITING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO WRITING IN NONACADEMIC CONTEXTS

2.1. Students will read and analyze nonfiction texts that present arguments about relevant national and international issues

2.1.1. Students will identify rhetorical methods and writing strategies used in the nonfiction text chosen for the course

2.1.2. Students will explain how rhetorical strategies used in the nonfiction text differ from rhetorical strategies used in more formal academic settings

2.1.3. Students will explain how the author of the nonfiction text invents and arranges the text to appeal to academic/non-academic audience values

2.2. Students will synthesize evidence from contemporary nonfiction and other sources in written texts that respond to relevant national and international issues

2.2.1. Students will identify their own positions on the issues drawn out by the nonfiction reading

2.2.2. Students will describe how the nonfiction text used in the course represents the positions and values of various other audiences

2.2.3. Students will compare their perspectives on the issue with other perspectives represented in the nonfiction reading

2.2.4. Students will explain how academic and nonacademic contexts affect the different viewpoints, values, and positions that writers must address

2.2.5. Students will use information and content from the nonfiction text (and other sources used in the course) to invent arguments for the texts they produce in the class

2.2.6. Students will argue persuasively for how their writing addresses the values of audiences invested in their chosen national/international problem

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

• What do you think the purpose of reflective writing assignments is?

• How do you feel about doing the reflective writing assignments?

• Who is your audience for your reflective writing assignments? How do you know?

• What do you think your audience expects from or looks for in your reflective essays?

• What do you think you learned about writing by doing reflective essays? [Show subjects their essays]

• What do you think academic writing or academic language means?

• Do you think you use academic writing or academic language in your work? Why or why not? Can you show me an example of academic writing from your work? [Show subjects their essays]

• After you learned you would be asked to write reflective essays for every assignment, did you think about reflective writing when you were doing your primary essays? If so, do you think that influenced your writing in any way? How?

• How do you think you will use what you learned about writing in this class in future classes?

• What other things would you like to tell me about reflective writing/writing for college?

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS ESSAYS

PG 1: Encomium/Invective

• Describe what you have helped your audience to understand about the topic you are writing about?

• What was your purpose is writing about the topic you chose?

• Explain what rhetorical strategies you used in your paper. Where did you use them (cite examples), and why did you use them?

• Describe the audience values you targeted in your writing.

• Describe how you arranged and organized your essay, and why you arranged and organized it as you did.

• Discuss the writing strategies you used, and explain why you used them.

• If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you focus on revising, adding, or changing?

PG 2: Confirmation/Refutation

• How have you helped readers understand the issues related to your topic?

• What was your purpose in writing about the topic you chose?

• Explain what rhetorical strategies you used in your paper. Where did you use them (cite examples), and why did you use them?

• Describe the audience values you targeted in your writing.

• Describe how you arranged and organized your essay, and why you arranged and organized it as you did.

• Discuss the writing strategies you used, and explain why you used them.

• If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you focus on revising, adding, or changing?

PG 3: Introduction of Law

• What law did you write about, and why did you choose that particular law?

• What did you argue in your thesis statement?

• Explain what rhetorical strategies you used in your paper. Where did you use them (cite examples), and why did you use them?

• Describe what you would like you audience to do, now that they know about the law you discuss.

• What kinds of sources did you use, and why did you choose those particular sources over others?

• What did you do for this paper, if anything, that was different from what you've done for other papers you've written for this class?

• What is the strongest aspect of your paper?

• If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you focus on revising, adding, or changing?

Research-based Action Essay Part 3: Reflective Analysis

Your final paper for this class consists of a reflective analysis of your experiences writing your Research Action Essay. The essay should do the following:

•Help the reader understand your choices in selecting:

- the particular issues you addressed from your larger topic
- what argument you made about the issues and why
- what course of action you advocate being taken
- what kinds of rhetorical strategies you used and where you used them
- discuss how you used stasis theory, logical proofs, and extrinsic proofs to make your argument clear and convincing
- what audience values you targeted
- how you decided to arrange and organize the essay
- what writing strategies you decided to emphasize to make your writing persuasive/informative/entertaining

APPENDIX E

PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION STATEMENT AND COLLEGE WRITING II COURSE DESCRIPTION

Program Mission

The First-Year Writing Program at [Southwest State University] studies and practices writing as a complex activity that is defined not only by material processes, historical forms, and conventional grammars, but also by acts of discovering, exploring, and listening to the world around us. Students in our program have a stake in shaping the world through writing, and our job is to aid them in that process. Our courses prepare students to intervene in a variety of communities, including both academic and nonacademic contexts. Through our curriculum, students learn to use a wide repertoire of strategies, styles, forms, and conventions in order to engage most effectively with diverse audiences. Strong habits of rhetorical analysis and production are developed in a number of effective classroom practices, including collaboration, discussion, reflection, and, of course, frequent opportunities to write and revise. Overall, we invite students to question what they know about writing: this process of questioning includes exploring new forms, processes, and contexts for writing that are evolving constantly around us. By the time students have completed the courses in the Introductory Writing sequence, they will be prepared for the demands of writing that they encounter in their future academic studies and professional lives.

Course Overview

College Writing II

College Writing II builds on the rhetorical strategies of College Writing I by providing students with the opportunity to study, experience, and practice advanced elements of

academic writing. The College Writing II course anticipates students' need for a flexible framework of academic writing that is responsive to the rhetorical situations they enter beyond the first-year course. The course also asks students to consider a range of perspectives on important contemporary issues and encourages them to engage academic audiences with accommodating, thoughtful, and well-supported research-driven arguments. Required nonfiction reading in College Writing II exposes students to longer, complex arguments about exigent social issues. The final project in the course asks students to produce a portfolio that reflects on their literate development throughout the course.

APPENDIX F

COLLEGE WRITING II ASSIGNMENTS AND RUBRICS (2015)

Each unit assignment consists of the prompt, formatting and submission requirements, and a series of "questions for consideration," which are designed to help students prepare for writing the essay. I have included prompts for units 1-5, but removed details about formatting and submission requirements. I have also included the prompt for revision memos, as well as the general rubric we were given to use to assess essays. In the case of unit 4, I provide the instructions instructors were given in the handbook, followed by the specific assignment I gave this semester my students. When I give the prompts from units one, two, three, and five to students, I edit them for clarity and, in some cases, change the word "students" to "you."

Unit One: Argument Description

For this assignment, you will select at least one, but no more than three, chapters from *Detroit: An American Autopsy* and describe how the writer develops his argument. Your description should isolate the writer's primary argument, as well as identify the secondary claims that support or elaborate it. In your description, you should also identify the types of evidence that the writer uses to justify his claims (make sure you include cited examples of these types of evidence). You should also pay particular attention to the grammatical delivery of such evidence (again, include cited examples). A successful argument description does not evaluate the viability of the writer's claims, nor does it attempt to draw implications from the reading. The goal in this assignment is to document and describe an argument. You do not need to incorporate audience analysis into the assignment unless the author appeals to his audience to make a claim. Primarily, we will be focusing on the internal mechanics of the argument.

Some Questions for Consideration:

(You are not required to answer these questions, but they may help you to brainstorm and develop your essay)

• How does a writer develop his or her argument from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph?

• How does the rhetorical concept of arrangement help us understand the published argument of a writer?

• How does attending to style in a writer's argument help us understand its purpose, audience, and forms of evidence?

• What is the difference between a primary and secondary argument?

• What is the relationship between an argument and the evidence used to support it?

• What argumentative strategies make the writer's claims persuasive?

• What is the relationship between the argument and its grammatical delivery?

• How does the arrangement of the argument make it persuasive?

• What stylistic features are unique to this author's argument?

Unit Two: Argument Synthesis

For this assignment, you will select either a chapter from *Detroit: An American Autopsy* and *at minimum* two outside sources or an essay from the course readings folder and *at minimum* two outside sources and evaluate their arguments in relation to one another. Your evaluation should address the following questions: to what extent are these two (or more) works participating in the same conversation? And, how, based on their respective positions, can we develop an overarching conclusion that charts a way forward? In order to answer these questions successfully, you must learn to abstract connections between multiple sources and explain, through analysis and close reading, their relevance to one another.

Your responses to these questions should move beyond obvious conclusions. One way to accomplish this is to consider the general problem that each essay addresses and explore why a solution to this common problem has not yet been developed. In other words, think about the complexity of the problem that multiple writers have named.

Please remember that an argumentative synthesis does not exhort its audience as if it were an op-ed piece. It is not interested in appealing to or replicating popular opinion. Instead, it is an attempt to produce insightful scholarly perspective by confronting the difficulty of naming and solving a relevant social problem.

To complete this essay successfully, you will need to implement the descriptive and analytical strategies from the previous essay as a method for close reading and argumentative invention. In this assignment, you are not describing the architecture of an essay or analyzing the implications of one argument in isolation, but selecting from

multiple sources specific examples that justify your argumentative evaluation of their contents. The evidence that supports your argument should emerge from the close reading strategies you are learning to develop.

Your argument should be critical, which does not mean that it must adopt a negative tone. A critical synthesis can support multiple writers' arguments but should do so in a manner that extends their implications with insight and innovation. An argument does not replicate an existing perspective but attempts to invent an idea that shapes attitudes in new ways.

Some Questions for Consideration:

(You are not required to answer these questions, but they may help you to brainstorm and develop your essay)

• How are the two essays you have selected addressing a similar problem?

• What are the material consequences of not paying attention to the argumentative trend you have identified in these essays?

• What types of writing have to exist in order to deliver the essays you are analyzing?

• What predictable conclusions might we draw about these two essays and how might we develop a more innovative perspective?

• How do the previous strategies of argument description and argument analysis prepare us for argument synthesis?

• How do citation and grammatical practices change when we are handling more than one essay?

• Are there commonplaces that travel across each essay?

• How might stasis theory help you diagnose the problem that each essay addresses?

Unit Three: Genre Analysis

In this unit, we will analyze academic genres. You will be responsible for collecting a writing assignment prompt from a discipline outside of your first-year writing course. Using the writing assignment prompt as an artifact that expects you to replicate typified patterns of social interaction, you will develop an argumentative analysis that explains what you are expected to do in order to complete the assignment. The argument must center on how the *specific* writing assignment defines the work of writing.

For example, if you are expected to conduct research to complete the writing assignment, then you need to explain the type of activity such research entails and what these assumptions tell you about the function of writing in that particular discipline. It is not enough to simply point out that the assignment prompt requires research. You must explain the *specific* activities you need to enact in order to successfully complete the assignment and *connect those activities to an explanation of how you should view the work of writing*. By the same token, it is not enough to explain that instructors expect students to complete multiple drafts; students must instead explain what that drafting process looks like as a material process (how much time, what types of technologies, what types of physical spaces, etc.) and connect that material process to a specific definition of writing. The overarching function of this assignment is to allow the concept of genre to expose how the activity of writing can be defined in a variety of ways depending on context.

Some Questions for Consideration:

(You are not required to answer these questions, but they may help you to brainstorm and develop your essay)

• What patterns of social action does this writing assignment (from a different discipline) ask you to engage in?

• How would you describe the patterns of social action that this writing assignment enacts?

• How might you analyze the implications of this assignment's definition of writing?

• What material processes of writing unfold if you engage in this particular act of writing?

• How might the habits of writing you have learned in first-year writing transfer to future writing scenes?

• What type of *ethos* does a particular genre encourage? At what point should that *ethos* be employed in the production of a final document?

Unit Four: Wild Card

This unit is designed to provide our instructors an opportunity to develop new writing assignments that articulate with the broader goals of the UNT Writing Program. Perhaps, you would like to have students produce multimedia writing or explore image-based argument in a more concentrated form. Or, perhaps you would like to help them learn strategies for evaluating secondary sources in research papers. Regardless of your choice, our recommendation is that the instructor either extend the pedagogical trajectory established in the first four units or develop a project that casts a different light on what students have studied to this point. This recommendation comes with one stipulation: the wild card unit is not an opportunity to teach students how to conduct the analysis of literary texts. This stipulation does not prevent you from incorporating literary works in this unit, nor does it imply that literary analysis is not valuable for learning how to write more effectively. Instead, this stipulation is designed to help you invent new pedagogical strategies within the established writing program curriculum. If you have questions about how to prepare this unit, you may contact any member of the writing program administrative team. *Each instructor in the writing program is expected to submit a unit description to the writing program administrative team, which should include an outline of pedagogical assumptions, instructional goals, and questions for consideration.* Instructors are <u>not</u> required to use ARCS in this unit unless they choose to do so.

Pedagogical Assumptions

- Instructors will submit pedagogical assumptions to writing program administrative team.

Instructional Goals

- Instructors will submit instructional goals to writing program administrative team.

Questions for Consideration

- Instructors will submit questions for consideration to writing program administrative team.

Assignment Details

- Instructors will determine and submit assignment details to writing program administrative team.

Unit Four: Image Analysis

(This is the assignment I wrote for this unit)

As our culture becomes increasingly visually oriented, it is important that we understand how visual arguments use photographs, graphics, drawings, text, and page and text design to persuade audiences. Visuals can enhance the ethos, pathos, and logos of an argument by elucidating the argument, supporting the argument, affecting audiences emotionally, and enhancing the creator's authority and credibility. Using visuals in arguments can also be challenging, as it requires that arguers have a deep understanding of their audience, think carefully about how visuals will affect the audience, and ensure that all parts of the visual work together to create the argument.

Given the ubiquity of visual images, we have internalized techniques associated with creating and considering visual images. Studying these techniques deliberately can encourage critical thinking about the role images play in social discourse.

For this assignment, you will choose an image and analyze and critique the argument it is making. **You must develop a thesis statement that makes an argument about or takes a stance on the image you are analyzing.** You should explore the rhetorical power of visual elements, and support your argument by analyzing various elements of the image (e.g. use of type, space, layout, and color; compositional elements; genre; the relationship between text and images, etc.).

Some Questions for Consideration:

(You are not required to answer these questions, but they may help you to brainstorm and develop your essay)

•What is the purpose of the image?

• With what particular social discourse and/or phenomenon is the image engaging?

•Who is the audience for the image? How do you know?

• What are the primary design elements of the image? How to they work together to develop an argument?

• How does the image use and/or evoke ethos, pathos, logos? What commonplaces does the image evoke?

• What is the context for the image (think about both where/how the image appears, and when it appears)?

• If the image uses text, how do the textual and visual elements work together to develop an argument?

Unit 5: Portfolio & Executive Portfolio Summary

The final unit in our first-year writing sequence is a student portfolio. Every student portfolio will be comprised of the final paper from the preceding three units, plus the final paper, revision memo, and first draft of the essay from unit 4. You have had the opportunity to revise each essay for a better grade provided that you explained how your revision process evolved according to the instruction and feedback you received over the course of the semester. If you chose not to revise your final papers from each unit, you must explain your justification for doing so. This is where the executive portfolio summary comes in.

An executive portfolio summary is an argument driven essay that explains the contents of the portfolio to someone who was not privy to the complexity of the revision process that led to its production. The tendency with this type of genre (especially because it has historically been cast as a "reflective" essay) is to appeal to the instructor's expertise in teaching writing or to characterize the process of growth as a kind of confessional. Neither approach is ever successful because it focuses more on the process of feeling one has learned rather than on tracking and analyzing the evidence of one's learning**.** So, the key with this executive summary is to focus on the writing, attending closely to key transitions in the revision process as they demonstrate growth.

Successful executive summaries will often point to evidence of growth and yet still identify opportunities for learning. For example, a student might analyze the variations between an earlier draft and its later revision, noting how such variations provide evidence of learning; then, in the process of that explanation, he or she might point out where the essay could continue to improve and attempt to pinpoint what he or she must still learn in order to take the next step. In other words, successful portfolios do

not have to be perfect portfolios. The function of a portfolio is to provide evidence of one's process of development as a writer within a semester course. The executive portfolio summary provides a framework for understanding what the contents of the portfolio convey in terms of the student's writing.

In addition to the final, revised essays from units 1-3, and the first draft, revision memo, and revised essay from unit 4, the portfolio contents should include at least 5 representative artifacts that demonstrate your development as a writer. These artifacts should be selected from a variety of potential examples and explained in the context of your discussion of your development.

Pedagogical Assumptions:

• Students may learn more about their writing process, and establish better writing habits, if they explain their development process over the course of a semester.

• The contents of portfolios do not speak for themselves.

• A successful portfolio includes more than final essays; it places final essays in conversation with in-process artifacts to explain the material unfolding of a student's writing development.

• A successful demonstration of learning involves more than appealing to the success of an instructor's methods; student writers should be able to identify and explain both successes and limitations from their work.

• Studying pathos in the context of justifying one's learning development can produce more conscious and complicated discussions of emotion in writing.

Questions for Consideration:

• What are the predictable ways we would expect to discuss our learning development, and how do we break from those conventions? How does the concept of pathos help us identify those predictable representations of learning development?

• What are some potentially dangerous pathetic appeals that compromise your analysis of your unfolding writing development?

• What are the areas of growth that can be measured in your writing? What are you hoping to learn as you move forward?

• At what moments do you see the greatest strides in your written development?

• What passages from your final essays or artifacts from your everyday writing activities best exemplify your writing development?

• What would you revise if you had more time?

• What writing strategies do you anticipate will help you most in your future classes?

• What overarching argument would you make about your writing development this semester that is not obvious to someone who reads the contents of your portfolio?

To get full credit for Unit 5, your portfolios must include the following, in the following order:

• Portfolio Executive Summary
• Description Essay Revision
• Analysis/Synthesis Essay Revision
• Genre Essay Revision
• Wild Card Essay Revision, Wild-Card Revision Memo, Wild Card Essay with my comments
• Appendix: at least 5 Representative (Cited*) Writing Development Documents

*These documents, along with your essays and revision memos, should be cited in your Executive Summary.

Revision Memo

Revision memos are documents that you produce in response to the open ended questions I have raised in my evaluation of you unit short essays. You will produce four revision memos throughout the term that correspond to the four units in our curriculum.** These revision memos are materials that are relevant to the portfolio executive summary.

The revision memo is comprised of three parts: First, you will write an executive summary that reflects on how my questions (on your unit essay) suggest opportunities for learning to write more effectively. In other words, you must abstract implications from the questions that I raised. Second, you must respond in writing to the questions that I raised. These responses should be elaborate and practice the methods of analysis that characterize the unit assignments. Third, you should develop a revision plan that includes *specific* strategies for improving your essay.

Evaluation: Revision memos will be evaluated on a complete/incomplete basis. If your revision memo is incomplete, you must revise it until it is evaluated as complete.

If your revision memo is considered complete, I will put a date on it. *If you turn in your revision by that date (along with the original draft with my comments and the revision memo), I will regrade your essay. If you opt to not complete the revision by that date (or you do not submit the original draft and the revision memo with the revision), but instead submit the revision with the final portfolio, I will not regrade the essay.*

**A reminder from the syllabus:

In order to receive a grade for a unit, students must complete and submit *all assignments* from their instructor and submit both a final unit essay and a revision memo. Students may revise their final unit essay for a better grade provided that they explain, in their revision memos, how they intend to revise.

If you do not turn in an essay, a revision memo, and a revised version of the essay for each unit, your grade for the unit will default to a 0. Each unit is worth 15% of your final grade in the class.

Assessment Rubric

Completion of Unit Assignment (# x 4 or 20%)

• To what degree has the student successfully completed the assignment's formal requirements?

• To what degree has the student successfully completed the assignment's conceptual requirements?

*In order to answer these questions, instructors must provide assignment criteria that outline the specific details that students must produce in order to demonstrate that they have completed the assignment according to expectations.

Argumentative Purpose (# x 4 or 20%)

• To what degree has the student successfully announced their argumentative purpose in the essay?

• To what degree is the student's argumentative purpose consistent with the unit assignment?

• To what degree is the student's purpose relevant to the audience that he or she has implicitly or explicitly identified?

Argumentative Coherence (# x 4 or 20%)

• To what degree does the student connect the constituent parts of their argument together?

• To what degree is the purpose of the student's essay connected to examples that justify their claims?

• To what degree is the purpose of the student's essay coherent with the analysis he or she draws from cited examples?

• To what extent is the purpose of the student's essay coherent with the audience he or she has identified?

• To what extent is the purpose of the student's essay coherent with the implications that he or she has drawn analytically?

Analytic Insight (# x 6 or 30%)

• To what degree does the student successfully select textual examples that foster analytic insight?

• To what degree does the student successfully prepare audiences to understand the textual examples from which he or she draws analytic insight?

• To what degree does the student successfully move beyond obvious conclusions when explaining the relevance of cited textual examples?

• To what degree does the student successfully explain the relevance between cited textual examples and their essay's purpose?

• To what degree does the student successfully explain the relevance between cited examples across the essay?

• To what degree are the student's analytically drawn recommendations attainable?

Conventional Execution (# x 2 or 10%)

• To what extent does the student successfully adhere to audience-specific mechanics?

• To what extent does the student successfully adhere to audience-specific academic conventions?

• To what extent does the student successfully espouse an argumentative style (or ethos) that is consistent both with their purpose and the assignment prompt?

*In order to answer these questions, instructors must provide mechanical and conventional criteria that outline the specific details that students must produce in order to demonstrate that they have completed the assignment according to expectations.

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