JOURNAL OF BASIC WRITING

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CONTENTS

CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 10-20 pages on topics related to basic writing, broadly interpreted. Authors need not limit themselves to topics previously announced because *JBW* issues will no longer be devoted to single topics.

Manuscripts will be refereed anonymously. We require four copies of a manuscript. To assure impartial review, give author information and a biographical note for publication on the cover page only. One copy of each manuscript not accepted for publication will be returned to the author, if we receive sufficient stamps (no meter strips) clipped to a self-addressed envelope. We require the new MLA style (*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 1984). For further guidance, send a stamped letter-size, self-addressed envelope for our one-page style sheet.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on BW and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about matters such as the social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; rhetoric; discourse theory; cognitive theory; grammar; linguistics, including text analysis, error descriptions, and cohesion studies; English as a second language; and assessment and evaluation. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening; cross-disciplinary insights for basic writing from psychology, sociology, anthropology, journalism, biology, or art; the uses and misuses of technology for basic writing; and the like.

The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in nontechnical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy; and teaching logs which trace the development of original insights.

Starting with the 1986 issues, a "Mina P. Shaughnessy Writing Award" will be given to the author of the best *JBW* article every four issues (two years). The prize is $500.00, courtesy of an anonymous donor. The winner, to be selected by a jury of three scholars/teachers not on our editorial board, will be announced in our pages and elsewhere.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

In the previous issue of *JBW*, I reported that the Exxon Educational Foundation had granted us funds to help *JBW* increase its readership and thereby also encourage additional scholarship in theoretical and practical issues affecting the teaching of basic writing. Those funds were spent on a one-time, direct mail campaign launched in early September 1986. I am now pleased to report that the purpose of the Exxon grant has been fulfilled: this issue of *JBW* will reach more than twice as many readers as has any past issue of *JBW*, a fact particularly impressive judging from direct mail statistics which led us to expect an increase in our subscription rolls of at most fifty percent.

Such an outpouring of interest in *JBW* signals how vigorously committed faculty throughout the United States and Canada remain to the men and women who come to our classes eager to succeed in the academy but underprepared for the writing and reading upon which that success depends. Dedication to the egalitarian ideals of access to academic literacy continues to grow, despite increasing trends toward larger classes and reduced funding.

We here at *JBW* realize, by the way, that many of our new subscribers did not hear from us as quickly as would be expected. For the delays, we deeply apologize; the flow of mail created unavoidable logistical problems. Our staff consists entirely of volunteers, except for our part-time Associate and Managing Editor, Ruth Davis. Indeed, this issue is being published in late, rather than early, Spring because of the crush of subscription work.

In other organizational matters, two new members join our Editorial Board and three terms end with this issue. We thank our outgoing members, welcome the new ones, and extend to our continuing members our deep appreciation for their supportive advice and their help with the referee process. Additionally, we thank Christopher Gould, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, for serving as an external reviewer while this *JBW* was being compiled. Also, Barry Kwalick, now affiliated with another CUNY office, will no longer be serving as Consulting Editor.

This collection begins with four essays about issues facing the profession. First, Joseph F. Trimmer gives a sobering report of his survey of basic writing programs in the United States and of interviews he conducted with publishers of basic writing textbooks. Next, in a rebuttal to Myra Kogen's article which appeared in our Spring 1986 issue, Janice N. Hays clarifies what she sees as misunderstandings in the literature of our profession about developmental models of intellectual growth. (*JBW* invited Kogen to respond, but she declined saying that Hays' material deserves a hearing without being seen only as a debate between two people.) Janice Neuleib and Irene Brosnahan argue that the training of writing teachers must include instruction in language and grammatical concepts, especially if the teachers hope to analyze students' errors accurately. Finally, Alice S. Horning draws on two case studies to postulate underlying connections between writing and reading difficulties.

This collection continues with a trio of essays about techniques, rooted in theory, for teaching basic writing. Sandra Schor suggests how we can lead students to an intuitive grasp of the reconceptualization needed for the process of revision. Marcia Curtis and Sara Stelzner portray how a modified form of Roger Garrison's conferencing method can enable students to discover what they want to say. Robert Moss shows us how television newscasts can offer useful occasions for developing students' analytic and critical abilities.

We invite your responses. And, as always, we welcome manuscripts that fulfill the criteria listed in our "Call for Articles" reprinted in each *JBW*.

Lynn Quitman Troyka

Joseph F. Trimmer

BASIC SKILLS, BASIC WRITING, BASIC RESEARCH

Anyone who studies the history of remediation in American education discovers quickly that the problem is not new. Over one-hundred years ago, Harvard University was recommending remediation to cure the alarming illiteracy of its students. In the subsequent decades, every institution of higher education, regardless of its admissions requirements, has had to confront the problem of the lower one-third, i.e., students, who for one reason or another, could not write as effectively as their peers. Most universities hoped that somehow these students would solve their own problems. Others, recognizing that the university should do something, assigned these students to an outpost known as basic skills, where, after a crash course in grammar, they were declared remediated and pushed into the mainstream.

The more recent history of remediation begins in the 1960s with the growth of community colleges and the advent of open admissions, and reaches its first flowering in the mid-1970s with the creation of comprehensive remedial programs, the formation of the National Association of Developmental Education (1976), and the publication of the work of Mina Shaughnessy. In her 1976 essay for Gary Tate's *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographic Essays,* Shaughnessy announced that teaching writing to the severely underprepared was the new frontier of the profession (137). The problems exhibited by this new group of students could not be solved by the simplistic drill of basic skills. They required the more complex solutions of basic writing, solutions that emerged from the basic research on language, composing, and learning. These solutions suggested that language should be taught in curriculum that in-

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tegrated speaking, listening, reading, thinking, and writing; that composing should be taught as a complex process of planning, drafting, and revising whole pieces of discourse to an audience for a purpose; and that learning occurred in an environment of trust where students were encouraged to take risks, examine the intelligence of their own mistakes, and develop a sense of authority over their own words.

The message seemed clear. Teachers of basic writing, indeed the whole educational establishment, needed to be reeducated on the subject of remediation. And for awhile the profession seemed to respond. In 1976, Andrea Lunsford reported that 90% of the universities she surveyed had already instituted or were planning to institute remedial English programs ("An Historical"). By 1978, virtually every major publisher had hired a special editor to develop a complete list of basic writing textbooks. And in 1981, Lynn Troyka began her Chair's address to the CCCCs by labeling the 1980s "The Decade of the Non-Traditional Student" (252).

I repeat this familiar history to remind us of the great expectations we once had for basic writing, and to underline, by contrast, the gloomy predictions our current government leaders are making for the future of remediation. Each new issue of *The Chronicle for Higher Education* contains another story of the dismantling of developmental education. The debate focuses on the claims of excellence and access. Legislators argue that we must reform our educational system to produce a more competitive work force. But many express "disdain for remedial programs at the college level, calling them wasteful and ineffective" (Jaschik 20). They recommend that remediation be restricted to secondary education, that colleges tighten their admissions requirements, and that states invest heavily in competency testing.

Those of us who share an enlightened view of basic writing cry "foul!" We argue that our legislators need remediation. Their view of developmental education is ill-informed, their pleas for higher standards shortsighted, and their preoccupation with testing more political than pedagogical. Indeed, we want to insist that teachers, not legislators, are the only authorities who can assess the real possibilities for language learning among basic writers. But before we ascend to the rostrum to begin this debate, we need to know what kind of support we have for our vision. The news from the profession is not good.

This Fall I surveyed all the colleges and universities in the United States to determine the character of their programs in basic writing.[1] My initial tabulation produced a promising consensus. Of those responding, 82% had established some form of basic writing program. 84% of those programs had been created at the instigation of the faculty or the faculty working in collaboration with the administration. 65% of them had been formed in the last twenty years. And 74% of them were housed in the English Department, rather than a skills center.

However, my attempt to tabulate the criteria for selecting basic writers produced considerable confusion. The 900 respondents reported 700 different ways to identify such students. 38% did use a writing

sample, but 57% relied almost exclusively on objective tests—S.A.T., A.C.T., or T.S.W.E. This data produced two additional kinds of confusion. Those institutions who used their own tests did not correlate their students' scores on local tests and their scores on nationally normed tests. Those institutions who relied on nationally normed tests reported a wide range of cutoff scores. For example, although 50% of those who used the S.A.T. verbal, reported cutoffs between 300 and 400, 9% reported scores as high as 500. The same was true of A.C.T., where the scores ranged from 10 to 24, and T.S.W.E., where the scores ranged from 20 to 38.

This confusion can be interpreted in two ways. First, university selection procedures are a matter of historical accident, administrative inertia, and economic expediency. Second, these procedures are the result of considered debate about the distinct nature of the institution's mission, student population, and writing curriculum. There is some evidence to support this second interpretation. Many universities have invested considerable time and money designing placement exams, training essay readers, and correlating testing criteria and writing instruction. But, unfortunately, most of the evidence supports the first interpretation. At most universities, basic writing is still basic skills, an ancillary program that for most administrators, teachers, and students "just doesn't matter."

Andrea Lunsford's description of basic skills courses at the turn of the century still defines most remedial English courses in 1986:

> The courses offered no college credit and were clearly punitive in nature. They emphasized mechanical correctness and relied heavily on drills and exercises; ill-prepared students were often thought of as either lazy or stupid or both. . . [and] courses were taught by teachers either totally or largely unprepared to teach writing and uninterested in doing so. ("Politics and Practices" 6-7)

Over 60% of those responding to my survey indicated that their basic writing course focused on the particles of sentence grammar. 30% added work on the paragraph. And 10% indicated that they tried to cover the short essay near the end of the term. But these concepts were hard to fix. For example, one school required a 300-word paragraph while another required a 250-word essay.

Of the faculty who teach this course, 70% are teaching assistants, part-timers, and non-tenure track instructors. That number is certainly suspect, distorted by the 378 two-year colleges that responded to my survey. At the 522 four-year colleges and universities, virtually all the basic writing teachers are in non-tenure track positions. Only 7% of the instructors at either type of institution receive any systematic orientation to the special challenges of teaching basic writing. They must face alone what one respondent called the "baptism by fire."

Nowhere is our profession's preference for the old course in basic skills more evident than its choice of textbooks. In his assessment of the new textbooks published for the remedial market, Robert Connors suggests that 95% of them seemed unaware of the research in basic writing (10).

Most focus on the units of sentence grammar and reduce writing to rule mastery. In fact, Connors reports that almost 60% of the 78 texts he examined were nothing more than workbooks, throwbacks to the old fill-in-the-blanks manuals of bonehead English (21).

In my own attempt to understand this new generation of textbooks, I conducted extensive interviews with the developmental editors at all the major publishing houses.[2] Every editor confessed that publishing for the remedial market was difficult and disheartening. It was difficult because each school was so trapped by the political issues of its own program that it seemed unable to reach any general consensus about the basic writing curriculum. It was disheartening because, despite this apparent diversity, most schools, in the end, made the same kind of choice—a sentence grammar workbook.

All editors pointed out that their list contained a wide range of texts. They published books that focused on the sentence, on the paragraph, and on the whole essay. But when pressed, they admitted that there was no confusion about which books were the most successful.[3] The sentence books were the bestsellers (some selling over 30,000 copies), the paragraph books were marginal winners (a few selling over 15,000 copies), and the whole essay books were, by and large, failures (most selling under 5,000 copies). The one exception to these figures was the crossover text, a whole essay text written for the remedial market but adopted for regular composition courses.

These editors are aware of the basic research on basic writing. They have all read proposals for texts combining speaking and writing, reading and writing, and thinking and writing. When these proposals have been sent out for review, some have garnered rave notices from prominent teachers and scholars throughout the profession. But when they are published, they sit in the warehouse awaiting the shredder. The more innovative the text, the more imminent the disaster. Most of the proposals they see, however, are not innovative. They are copycats of the sentence books they already have on their lists. These editors know what kind of books they should be selling, but they also know what kind of books sell. Their choice is to wash their hands of the whole business, nurse their golden eggs, or hit the road once again in search of the basic writing grail.

These expeditions contribute to their frustrations because they see how their texts are taught. Often they see talented teachers who, in spite of their teaching load, somehow manage to work enthusiastically with hundreds of individual students. For such teachers, textbooks are a supplement; they use their students' own writing as the text. More often they see torpid teachers who, disgruntled by their assignment, simply direct student traffic through their classroom. For them, textbooks are the curriculum; they use the exercises to fill up each hour of instruction. And usually they see the truly zealous teachers who, despite all the evidence to the contrary, firmly believe that teaching grammar is teaching writing. For them, the textbook is the Bible, and they insist that their students memorize every commandment.

In many ways, these truly zealous teachers loom as the most formidable adversary for those who believe in basic writing. Unlike the talented teachers, who see complex solutions to the complex problems of their student writers, the truly zealous provide simple diagnoses and fraudulent cures for the severely underprepared. Unlike the torpid teachers, who do not care what curriculum is taught, the truly zealous argue passionately for manuals that enable them to identify and attack the gross illiteracies in their students' writing. And like the unenlightened legislators, who do not want to deal with the problems of remediation, the truly zealous believe that minimum competency testing will make the problems go away.

When developmental editors return from such expeditions, they often ask one simple question: Why hasn't the basic research on basic writing had more of an impact on remedial English?[4] There are many answers. The research is not known. Remedial English teachers are too overworked to read research even if they knew it existed. The research is not understood. Many of the ideas presented in this research rest on larger theories of language, composing, and learning that these teachers have not studied. The research is not believed. Basic research in basic writing often challenges time-honored truisms about students, teachers, and writing that these teachers prefer to preserve.

The simplest answer, of course, is that given the training, incentives, and political status of these teachers, they see no reason to invest more of themselves than they already have in remedial English. This view also prevails at the Administration Building, where Deans resist investing in labor-intensive courses, and at the State House, where legislators are reluctant to invest in one more compensatory program. Unfortunately, as long as basic writing is defined as basic skills it will not attract investors. If our basic research in basic writing has taught us anything, it has taught us that when we ascend to the rostrum we must redefine the investment plan of legislators, administrators, and colleagues in two ways.

Pay now or pay later. This is a version of Mike Rose's argument on social exclusion (539). If we condemn remedial students to basic skills, we deny them full citizenship in the university community. It we don't invest in an enlightened basic writing curriculum that provides opportunities for a meaningful education, we may eventually have to invest in more costly compensatory programs such as welfare or unemployment.

Pay now and earn later. This is a version of Mina Shaughnessy's argument on intellectual opportunity ("Some Needed Research" 317-320). If we see the difficulties of basic writers as providing clues to the larger problems of cognitive development, then our teaching and research in remediation becomes the most, not the least, important investment anyone could make in higher education. By paying for such an enlightened program now, we will eventually earn valuable dividends in language, composing, and learning for all the stockholders in American education.

Appendix A

Questionnaire on Basic Writing

1. Does your college or university offer courses in basic (i.e., remedial) composition? Yes＿＿ No＿＿
2. How long have you offered such courses? At whose instigation were they developed—e.g., faculty, administration, other?
3. Where are these courses "housed"—English Department, Developmental Studies, other?
4. How is the remedial student identified on your campus? Cite specific placement instruments and cutoff scores.
5. How would you characterize the difference between your remedial and regular composition courses. Be as specific as you can as to (a) texts, (b) syllabi, (c) writing assignments, (d) teaching methods.
6. Who teaches your remedial courses—adjuncts, TA's, instructors, professors? Estimate percentages.
7. How does this faculty make decisions—independently, committee of the whole, administrator and staff, other?
8. What kind of special orientation or in-service training do you provide for this faculty?
9. What partnerships has your faculty established with the faculty in other departments concerned with teaching basic students—e.g., study skills, reading, math?
10. Is anyone in your department or university conducting any research on teaching basic writing? Please list: name, phone number, general area of research.

Notes

[1]The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent to the mailing list of all two-year and four-year colleges provided by the Modern Language Association. The list contains 2,542 names. My 900 replies represent a return of 35.4%.

[2]I conducted these lengthy interviews with the developmental editors at twenty publishing houses. The portrait of the developmental editor is a composite of these individuals.

[3]The sales figures for types of textbooks are an average for all publishers rather than an actual count of individual sales.

[4]Some indication of the significance of this knowledge gap is suggested by Gary Tate's decision to reprint Mina Shaughnessy's 1976 essay, "Basic Writing," in his 1986 edition of *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays*. Basic writing teachers still need to read the basic research that was available ten years ago.

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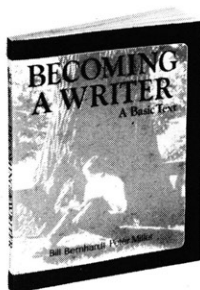
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Janice N. Hays

MODELS OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING: A RESPONSE TO MYRA KOGEN *ET AL.*

[JBW *invited Kogen to respond but she declined saying that Hays' material deserves a hearing without being seen as a debate between two people.*]

I wish to respond to Myra Kogen's article, "The Conventions of Expository Writing," which appeared in the Spring 1986 *Journal of Basic Writing*. In that article, Kogen challenged the relevance of models of intellectual development to the teaching of writing and more specifically discussed an article of mine in which I applied William Perry's model of intellectual and ethical development during the college years to a group of college students' papers. In making this response, I am less interested in narrowly answering Kogen's remarks about my earlier piece than I am hopeful of clarifying some misconceptions that many of our colleagues in composition apparently have about intellectual development and its relevance to writing, misconceptions I have heard articulated at numbers of writing conferences in recent years. I do not mean to imply that Kogen herself necessarily shares all of these views. Probably the most emphatic published statement challenging developmental perspectives is Ann Berthoff's article "Is Teaching Still Possible?" In making my case, I will discuss several "axioms" that address prevalent misunderstandings about developmental models.

1. *Adult development is a widely demonstrated phenomenon.* Many of those who question notions of adult intellectual development draw

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upon some of Piaget's work with children and evidently conclude that "development" means models of child development. Berthoff writes, "The attempt to apply the Piagetian stage model to non-children is futile" (744), and Kogen likewise characterizes schemes of intellectual development as describing "the growth of concept formation in young children" (24).

Yet the current field of intellectual development extends well beyond work with children. To begin with, near the end of his career Piaget modified his own earlier ideas about cognitive development, especially those concerning the evolution of "Formal-operational" thinking in young adults (formal operations are "thinking processes that involve propositional relations, reasoning about improbable situations, or isolation of factors which combine to determine the outcomes of events" [Kurfiss, "Intellectual . . . Development" 5]). Piaget concluded that in many thinkers formal operations developed later than he had originally supposed, and that there was wide cultural and individual variation in the nature and rate of such development ("Intellectual Evolution" 6-12). Recent studies of American college populations confirm this conclusion, indicating that many entering college freshmen are not fully formal-operational thinkers (McKinnon).

Further, during the last decades, investigators have studied adolescent and adult development, investigators such as Erikson; Fischer; Harvey, Hunt and Schroder; Kitchener and King; Kohlberg; Loevinger; Perry; and others. Especially interesting for writing researchers are models such as Riegel's and Basseches', which see dialectical thought as a post-formal-operational development. Each of these models observes that human beings grow in their thinking over the course of their adult lives and that intellectual development is *not* fully complete by the time of adolescence. Rather, it is a lifelong process although its manifestations vary widely from one context and social milieu to another and are subject to individual differences.

Despite variations, there are common threads in these models that "trace paths from simplicity and absolutism to complexity and relativism, from concreteness to abstractness, and from external to internal regulation of behavior" (Kurfiss, "Intellectual . . . Development" 1). Knefelkamp and Slepitza suggest that the Perry Scheme of intellectual development, for example, is a "general process model" that can provide "a descriptive framework for examining the development of an individual's reasoning about many aspects of the world." They also draw upon Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder's premise that individuals have many "conceptual systems" for numbers of content areas and that each of these systems progresses through developmental phases, suggesting that the Perry Scheme can be adapted to the development of individuals' thinking about various content areas. They outline criteria that will reflect qualitative (developmental) change in varying subject areas: the thinker's language choice, openness to alternative perspectives, "locus of control," abilities to analyze and synthesize, and so on. They apply these criteria to college students' ideas about their careers, and test the model for its validity (54-57); elsewhere, Knefelkamp, Widick, and Stroad make a

similar application of Perry's model to women's thinking about themselves as women (16-17; also see Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker). In summary, these researchers make distinctions between the structures and processes of intellectual development and the contents that flesh them out in particular areas. It should be possible, then, to develop such a model for any content area or process, including writing and reading.

Finally, many models—for example, Kohlberg's, Perry's, and Kitchener and King's—have been subjected to rigorous testing in a variety of settings. As a result, the models are widely verified, and the degree of this verification supports the conclusion that adult intellectual development is a well-established phenomenon. For decades, the Institute of Human Development at Berkeley has engaged in longitudinal studies on several developmental models. The Perry Scheme Network alone has a 20-page bibliography of work done with Perry's model or models growing out of it. (For information about the Perry Scheme newsletter and bibliography, write to: Larry Copes, *Newsletter, Perry Development Scheme Network*, ISEM, 10429 Barnes Way, St. Paul, MN 55075.) There are enough statistically significant parallels among many developmental schemes to warrant their examination by educators. In exploring uses of such models, instructors would want to consider those that have the greatest explanatory power—that is, can account for the widest spectrum of relevant behavior—and the strongest record of verification.

2. Developmentalists are not maturationists. Another prevalent notion holds that models of intellectual development posit rigid schemes of automatic growth that occur willy-nilly. Berthoff describes development as "a conception of learning as contingent on development in a straightforward, linear fashion; of development as a preset program which is autonomous and does not require instruction" (749), and both she and Kogen use the phrase "deficit model," a term implying a neural-maturational conception of development. Yet Bickhard, Cooper, and Mace argue that neural-maturational conceptualizations of the Piagetian model are inaccurate and are, in fact, based upon mistranslations and misinterpretations of Piaget. Such misinterpretations reflect vestiges of logical positivism that try to impose types of causality and quantification on Piaget that are alien to his concepts. They insist that Piaget's model is not neurological but cognitive; it proposes a sequence of cognitive structures that precede each other in "a logically necessary developmental structural sequencing" (251-255 and *passim*). Nor is development straightforward and linear. A spiral would be a more accurate geometric representation of concepts of adult development.

Perhaps the most familiar description of how development occurs is contained in Piaget's idea of "equilibration." Piaget contends that a learner is in a state of cognitive equilibration—stability—when all the "facts" of her world fit her mental model of that world. However, as she becomes aware of new information that she cannot assimilate into the model, she moves into a phase of "disequilibration"—of instability or imbalance—which she resolves by actively modifying or changing her

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earlier model to accommodate the new information, and so eventually returns to a state of equilibration but at a higher level of cognitive functioning ("Equilibration"). At each new phase, she must possess the cognitive prerequisites for intellectual growth, and the kinds of dissonances the learner experiences at various points during her development and her accommodations to them follow a pattern; the process is not random. Davison, King, Kitchener, and Parker more generally characterize develop mental assumptions:

> The changes in reasoning described by such theories are typically developmental in the sense that they are internal to the individual, they are irreversible, they involve the acquisition of more adequate thought structures, and they are directional over time . . . . Change from one stage to another is structural change in that the change involves a reorganization of thought. Progressively higher stages incorporate the thinking of lower stages. No stage in a sequence can be skipped . . . . (121)

Yet although the development is systematic, it is not automatic—it results from a process in which the individual learner brings both her innate and learned characteristics, skills, and abilities to construct meaning in response to and interaction with an environment that requires such construction of her. As Kurfiss, discussing Piaget, explains:

> Piaget's theory is founded on a "constructionist" or "interactionist" epistemology. That is, he emphasizes the active participation of the knower in the process of understanding the world. "The world" as we know it is the product of inherent properties of mind interacting with inherent properties of the environment. We do *not* arrive with a "blank slate"—either at birth or at college . . . our primary mission, cognitively at least, is to make sense of the world. ("Intellectual . . . Development" 4)

Perry stresses that the development he traced in his study *was the product* of a modern liberal-arts setting like Harvard, with its systematic confronting of students with multiple and often conflicting perspectives on reality. It was through sorting out and coming to terms with such viewpoints that students developed intellectually and ethically (35ff). Other researchers have verified in other college settings the kind of development Perry observed at Harvard. Currently, some researchers—Harris, for example—assert that conflict *is* the impetus to intellectual development. Nor does a developmental perspective presuppose that people reason at only one level. Rather, most subjects will think in ways characteristic not only of their predominant stage of development but also of adjacent stages (Davison, *et al.* 129-130).

Let me use the Perry Scheme to explain all this further. Perry's model describes a growth process in which student thinkers move from quite dichotomized, absolutist, and authoritarian perceptions and understandings of their worlds (Dualism) through a series of positions in which they realize that there are many views of reality and knowledge

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(Multiplicity). At this point, thinkers cannot effectively weigh and evaluate those views although they often go through the motions of doing so in response to all those professors who insist upon it. Finally—and perhaps as a result of going through such motions—they achieve perspectives that Perry calls Relativism and Committed Relativism. Committed relativists realize that although there are many opinions on any subject, some are more credible than others. If human beings are to function in a pluralistic world, they must commit themselves to positions even though they may discover new information next week that requires them to revise their thinking (many people dislike the terms "Dualism," "Multiplicity," and "Relativism," and Perry himself has had second thoughts about them. But for better or worse, they seem to be firmly attached to the Perry Scheme). As students move through this sequence of development, their thinking becomes more complex, more qualified, and they become more aware of ambiguity and of the necessity for elaboration and support of their ideas. Yet paradoxically, they also hold and present their ideas with greater conviction because those ideas are more their own rather than something handed to them by external authority.

In writing, dualistic thinkers often behave in rulebound ways. If a teacher has once told them that they should not use first person in their papers, they will *never* do so. When another instructor suggests that in a given paper, first person might be the most effective stance for the writer to assume, dualistic thinkers will ask, with genuine distress, "Well, what's right? Should you use first person or not use it?" And in my experience even though the instructor carefully explains about different strategies for different rhetorical situations, dualistic thinkers will still operate according to "rules" ("But last time you *said* I should use first person!"). It takes many such experiences over a considerable period of time for dualistic students to loosen their rigid adherence to absolutes.

By contrast, the multiplistic thinker has discovered that apparently one teacher says one thing and another something else, and concludes that the authorities are hopelessly confused. He may use second person and the informal pronoun "you" in an essay where it is ineffective to do so, on the grounds that "everyone has a right to their [sic] own opinion" and that therefore his opinion is as good as anyone else's; he finds it comfortable to use "you"—even in a formal essay analyzing Marx's ideas on the alienation of labor. In other words, he has difficulty applying contextual considerations to his writing decisions and, rejecting the rigid rules that guide the dualistic thinker, assumes that anything goes. By contrast, the relativistic thinker has realized that the point of view writers adopt depends upon the particular rhetorical context and the writer's purposes in it, and chooses her strategies accordingly.

Most of the time, a writer may function multiplistically—choosing her point of view in writing on the basis of what she feels like doing or what seems easiest—often using the all-purpose "you," meaning "one." But in circumstances where she feels relaxed and secure she may see the value of manipulating her point of view according to the rhetorical context

in which she is writing and, if sufficiently challenged, may do so with some success. In other situations, where her anxiety level is high—on an important exam, for example—she may return to rigid, rulegoverned writing behavior (*never* use "I").

3. *Developmentalists are not anti-context and anti-learning.* Those who express caution about developmental perspectives assert the importance of context and learning in writing (Bartlett and Scribner 166); others question the possible culture-specific nature and biases of developmental models (Bizzell 454). Yet contemporary developmentalists are fully committed to the importance of learning and context. Perry and others have focused upon the intellectual development encouraged in American college settings. Erikson found that the structure of psychosocial development held across cultures but that the content filling and structure varied enormously from one cultural context to another. In the same way, Gilligan suggests that Kohlberg's structures of moral development are fleshed out differently in our culture by men and by women although Levine, Kohlberg, and Hewer claim that the model's broad outlines stand up cross-culturally while its details vary from setting to setting. As one group of developmentalists has phrased it, "It is the confluence of social-personality and cognitive factors that underlie cognitive change. To study only one or the other leads invariably to a distorted picture of development" (Cavanaugh, Kramer, Sinnott, Camp, and Markley 147). Part of the good news about developmental models is that learning *can* foster intellectual development, that context *does* make a difference in intellectual performance. And without question, the context in which writing is performed will influence that performance. Freshmen who have written argumentative essays for four years in high school will, at least initially, outperform those who have never written an argumentative paper. In a context in which reading and writing are ignored or devalued, it will be the rare person who reads and writes proficiently. Nevertheless, the learner's context is not the only shaper of her level of performance.

4. *Developmentalists contend that intellectual growth cannot proceed without cognitive readiness.* At times, those who oppose developmental approaches to writing seem to imply that improved performance depends only upon the teaching of certain tasks or ideas. For example, Kogen writes that students have difficulty with their college writing tasks because they are "*simply* insufficiently familiar with the conventions of expository discourse" and that a particular student "needs *merely* to be told about and given practice with the convention [of explaining the relation ships between generalizations and their supporting examples and discussion]" (Kogen 25, 30; emphasis added). I am skeptical about what such statements imply because I have taught basic and freshmen writers "how arguments in expository discourse are characteristically developed, how a chain of reasoning is joined and filled in" (Kogen 28), and have given them practice with these matters. Yet they continue to have difficulty integrating and synthesizing both their own ideas and those from their readings into an hierarchically con-

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structed, carefully argued, and well-supported and elaborated piece of academic discourse—which is not to say that they don't improve the quality of their writing or learn the correct format of an academic paper and many of its conventions. But no matter how much I teach, coax, cajole, or bully them, most freshmen will not write like most seniors. "But," critics will object, "of course freshmen don't write like seniors! Seniors have three more years of experience with the college context than freshmen do."

Exactly. And it is this additional time in the college setting plus the nature of that setting itself that makes it possible for freshmen to progress cognitively until, by the time they are seniors, most of them perform like "seniors." But a developmental perspective insists that the sequence by which students progress intellectually is not idiosyncratic and random: it follows a pattern that has been observed in thousands of college students. And I would also emphasize that the structures of mature thought differ from those of less mature thinking—seniors don't simply have more experience, they simply have learned more than freshmen. They think in different ways about the realities they examine. (I am, of course, generalizing: individual freshmen may well think in more mature ways than individual seniors.)

5. *A developmental approach to learning does not mean "slotting" students but, rather, beginning where they are in order to teach them most effectively.* I suspect that writing teachers who resist developmental approaches fear that they blur individual differences among students and lead to college-level "tracking" of students into developmentally segmented strata. These concerns are legitimate, and many of them are shared by developmentalists themselves. Perry, for example, has expressed caution about the formulation of objective measures (as distinct from personal interviews and essay responses) to assess learners' Perry Scheme positions precisely because he has worried that such instruments would be used to "pigeonhole" students. In his own study, Perry asked students to talk and then *listened*, with empathy and respect, to their individual voices and concerns; the developmentalists I know share that respect. I find it hard to believe that anyone could read Perry's work and believe that it demeans and dehumanizes students.

It is ironic that such charges are being leveled against developmentalists when they are the very ones who have championed student-centered learning, individualized teaching, respect for differences between students, the use of small-group work, and constructionist activity in the classroom of the sort whose effectiveness Hillocks has demonstrated (although not from a specifically developmental perspective; 122-126; 192-204). Berthoff, for example, deplores developmental approaches to writing, apparently unaware that the kind of curriculum she proposes as an alternative is a thoroughly developmental one that both Piagetians and Perry-ites would probably applaud (750-754).

Further, I doubt that developmental perspectives will lead to more segregation of college students by competency level than is currently the

case. We already assume that freshmen will do better in freshman or sophomore level classes than in senior level ones. The chances are that within a freshman class, students would not be more than one full level of intellectual development apart from each other, if that much; typically, students progress only one to two full levels during their entire undergraduate careers. In the classroom, students at a higher level would naturally pose challenges for those at lower ones, challenges that could be used to help to stimulate growth.

Berthoff, Kogen, and others evidently also assume that developmentalists believe that students "can't think." But to say that many college freshmen are not thinking or writing in mature ways is not to say that they cannot or will not do so in a few more years or that they cannot as freshmen learn to perform with more intellectual rigor than they do when they first arrive at college. To assert the above is not to belittle students' mental abilities. It is to suggest that we can teach them best by taking into account where they are developmentally—in the same way that we try to take into account their varying learning styles—and use our knowledge of developmental processes to construct curricula that will enhance their intellectual growth, as too often traditional college work does not, with its large lecture sections, objective tests, and types of writing that most freshmen are not conceptually ready for.

Finally, the criticism that models of intellectual development blur differences and categorize individuals could be made of any model or theory. By their very nature, models blur specific variants in order to arrive at general descriptions that will be applicable to more than one person in more than one context. Loss of specifying detail is the price of generalization, and yet we could not function without it. What we do need to do is exercise caution and common sense in applying any model to particular situations remembering always that models describe large-scale trends rather than prescribe rigid molds. And certainly we need to be aware of the critiques and limitations of particular theories of intellectual development (see Kurfiss, "Intellectual . . . Development" for a summary of such critiques) and to beware of jumping to facile conclusions on the basis of partial information. The same caution applies to any new theory, model, or pedagogy, whether it is concerned with intellectual development, sentence combining, or even "natural-process" approaches to writing. I have, for instance, seen numbers of students—especially basic writers—for whom a natural process pedagogy just doesn't work because it does not provide the structures and strategies they need to solve particular writing problems; such exceptions do not invalidate the model, but they may necessitate more complex understandings of the writing process.

6. *A developmental perspective illuminates many student writing difficulties.* In discussing student writing, Kogen argues that writers' levels of intellectual development have little to do with their practice of such academic conventions as setting a scene and giving readers background information, fully explaining points to the reader, and so on, asserting that "conventions are not the same as thought or intellect"—that if

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students do not use these conventions, they fail to do so simply because they don't know about them (31-33 and *passim*). Certainly, there is some truth to this contention—the genres and conventions of academic writing are quite special, and we all must learn to perform them competently. Further, different disciplines employ differing genres, and the genre in which we have been "socialized" will affect the way we view and think about reality.

But even though we do indeed use conventions automatically once we have appropriated them, the emergence of writing conventions is a product of thought: someone someplace uses a writing "convention" for the first time because it meets a communicative need; others, perceiving that the device does just that, also use it, and eventually it becomes a convention. Further, we do not use a convention really effectively until we have reached a level of intellectual development necessary to grasp the convention's communicative purpose. Shapiro, for example, has demonstrated that writers' performance in establishing adequate background for their readers is significantly related to the writer's level of intellectual development as assessed on the Perry Scheme.

I would like to examine a further example of the relationship between writing convention and intellectual development. Kogen suggests that in discourse it is conventional for writers to acknowledge their readers' "belief systems" (33). Yet in order to do so, writers must possess several cognitive prerequisites: first, they must be able to play the role of the reader, to enter into the reader's frame of reference and understand it. To do so, the writer must be able to "decenter," to recognize that perspectives other than her own exist and to imagine what they are—an ability at least partly dependent upon her level of intellectual development. If the reader's belief system is very different from her own, the writer must, as Kogen suggests (33), be able to acknowledge its legitimacy even if she hopes to change the reader's mind. Certainly in most rhetorical situations, she cannot communicate effectively with readers whom she regards as wrong or wicked or whose premises she simply does not grasp because they are so alien to her. Yet, again, this ability to understand the legitimacy of different views is a function of intellectual development.

In a research study at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, we are exploring several aspects of writers' relationships to their readers in reference to their levels of intellectual development, as independently established by trained Perry Scheme raters at another institution. Our results show that in a group of 52 student writers, there are statistically significant relationships between writers' audience postures and strategies and their levels of intellectual development (audience activity was measured by a textual coding rubric developed for the study).

To illustrate these connections just in terms of writers' awareness of their readers' belief systems, let me cite excerpts from three representative papers. The topic asks students to write about tough drunk-driving laws under consideration by the Colorado legislature. They have been instructed to take a position on these laws and to try to persuade readers at least to consider the writer's point of view. In this paper, the second

piece of writing in the study, subjects are addressing readers who will be apt to disagree with them (several such readerships were suggested). All three writers support tougher laws and are writing to members of the Colorado beverage industry—brewers, tavern owners, and so on. Excerpts have been taken from either the beginning or end of the papers, positions where in argumentation writers often address and exhort their readers. Here are the three excerpts:

a. Now of course you are against tougher drunk-driving laws, but that is only because you and your industries make the alcoholic beverages and people are buying them. You don't care how they abuse themselves or others with it, just as long as you make money from it.

* * *

b. Being members of Beverage Industries and Brewers Associations doesn't change the awareness of the above facts [about drunk-driving accidents]. Selling alcoholic beverages is not the issue. Having people overindulge to the point of losing control of their driving abilities is the issue at hand. The local pubs, bars and home parties should be responsible for the actions of the individuals who frequent their business.

* * *

c. The consideration of tougher laws on drunk-driving presently underway in the Colorado state legislature presents a unique opportunity for those of us whose very livelihood depends on the sale of alcoholic beverages. This controversy presents us with a choice. We can lobby strongly against the tougher laws or we can come out in support of them. If a lobby in opposition of the laws succeeds, what will be our gain? Sales of alcoholic beverages will probably remain nearly stable while our public image may have suffered greatly. Strong support of these laws may result in a temporary drop in beverage sales which, if it occurred, would be short in duration. Our public image however would be greatly enhanced. I propose that in this situation it is distinctly to our advantage to avoid being labelled "the big money industry bad guys who bought off the state legislature" and instead to cultivate the benefits which would result from our support of these laws. . . .

In the first excerpt, the writer is aware of her readers' position and their reasons for it: they are opposed to the laws because they believe such legislation will adversely affect their business. But she suggests that they feel this way because they just don't care what happens to people as long as the brewers' association makes money from the sales of alcohol. Even if this statement is true, making the point as bluntly and judgmentally as the writer does would alienate her readers rather than persuade them to consider her point of view. In several other places in the paper she insults them in a similar manner, seemingly unaware of the impact such

statements would have upon these readers. Nowhere does she genuinely explore their concerns and the issues underlying them.

The second writer does try to understand his readers' interests—that the laws might cut into their business—and to discriminate between all drinking and excessive drinking, a discrimination that places tavern owners in an advantageous light. Yet the abruptness with which he makes these points sounds imperious rather than persuasive; further, he seems unaware that his proposal that bar and tavern owners assume responsibility for their patrons' conduct is extremely controversial. Neither here nor elsewhere in the paper does he make an effort to discuss the issue, offer arguments in support of his position, and deal with probable objections to it. Rather, he delivers edicts, and his tone, like that of the first writer, has a moralistic cast that would probably antagonize his readers although not as much so as the first writer's judgments.

The third writer aligns herself with her readers by talking about "those of us whose very livelihood depends on the sale of alcoholic beverages," a strategy reflecting her ability to enter into her readers' perspectives and try to understand them. She approaches support of the laws on the basis of reader self-interest, but a self-interest presented in the best possible light—that is, as socially enlightened and responsible. Thus she appeals to her readers' ideal image of themselves while at the same time suggesting their stake in the issue. She praises, even flatters, her readers throughout, a strategy intended to get readers on her side so that they will consider what she has to say, and one reflecting her sensitivity to their values and viewpoints. Notice also that she approaches them as rational people capable of weighing the tradeoff of decreased sales for improved public image although she is probably too facile in minimizing the law's negative impact on sales.

These excerpts reveal a progression in writers' sensitivity to their readers' perspectives, values, and self-interest regarding the drunk-driving issue. The first writer, a 17-year-old high school senior whose career goal is journalism, was assessed as being at a dualistic position on the Perry Scheme scale (Position Two). She tends to segment the world into Right and Wrong, and thus to assume an adversative and judgmental relationship towards those whose values differ from hers. The second writer, a 29-year-old college senior in Engineering, is rated an early multiplistic thinker (Perry Position Three). He is aware of multiple perspectives on the issue but has difficulty justifying his own beliefs in relationship to differing ideas. Instead, he adopts the position that his own point of view has as much validity as any other. Thus he offers no support for his contention that tavern owners should assume responsibility for their patrons' drinking behavior. Although he pays lip service to his readers' viewpoints, he shows little real sensitivity to their stake in the issue—he wants to persuade them and so glosses over the problems his position could create for tavern owners. The third writer is a 19-year-old junior majoring in Business; she is rated a late multiplistic thinker (Perry Position Four with some Position Five thinking patterns). She understands that those who differ from her may have legitimate reasons for doing so, that they are

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best approached reasonably and empathetically, and that to do so need not compromise her own position.

The trends represented by the progression in these three excerpts typify the larger batch of papers, and in multiple regression equations are significantly related both to overall paper score and to subjects' levels of intellectual development. Further, on analyses of variance, the behavior I have pointed to differs significantly between groups segmented by level of intellectual development. Analyses have also demonstrated that these trends are not explained as satisfactorily by age and grade as they are by Perry Scheme rating. We are led to the conclusion that our subjects' audience activity is very much related to their levels of intellectual development (Hays, Brandt, and Chantry).

This study has not explored the difference that intervention or "treatment" would make in writers' performances, and we need to do so. I suspect that the right kind of instruction would indeed improve writers' performances *up to a point*, but that they would also come up against intellectual thresholds beyond which they could not easily move until they had developed the necessary cognitive structures to do so. Raforth's studies—giving proficient and nonproficient freshmen writers varying amounts of information about their readers—can suggest such a conclusion (249).

7. *A developmentally organized curriculum can facilitate students' academic progress, including their writing progress.* In developing mature intellectual abilities, students do not leap from being dualistic thinkers to being multiplistic or relativistic ones in one jump. Rather, they acquire the cognitive prerequisites that enable them to construct abilities leading to mature thought in a sequence of phases, each of which they must "master" before moving on to the next. We know what these phases are, at least in the American college setting, and by constructing curricula that take advantage of that knowledge, we can help our students make their transition into intellectual maturity and can to a degree accelerate the process.

The opposite approach is for college professors to continue doing what too many have always done: impose their own postdoctoral standards of performance and then berate students when they can't measure up to those standards. (I suspect that few teachers of basic writing take these lofty and unrealistic postures towards students, but plenty of faculty members in "regular" academic departments—including English departments—certainly do.) Such inappropriate treatment of students may actually slow down their intellectual growth, for it can provoke so much disequilibrium that students cannot handle it and may fall back temporarily to earlier and "safer" levels of functioning. At the very least, instruction that is inappropriate for students' levels of intellectual functioning can produce results opposite to what the instructor has hoped to accomplish. For example, a study by Stern and Cope (a pre-Perry study) showed that pedagogy geared to what they call "rationals" (comparable to Perry's relativists) caused the "stereopaths" (dualists) in the

class to become increasingly "stereopathic" in their thinking. On the other hand, "instructional procedures adapted to the needs of the stereopaths yielded significant academic gain in comparison with similar students" not given the special pedagogy (362). Many studies show that developmentally structured curricula *do* produce results—better ones, often, than curricula structured traditionally (for example, Berg and Coleman; Stephenson and Hunt).

Research with the Perry Scheme in many college settings suggests that many freshmen are late dualistic or early multiplistic thinkers (Mentowski, Moeser, and Strait 191). To such students, the ideal learning paradigm is probably a spelling test where the answers are clearly right or wrong. Dualistic students want their instructors to give them the right answers—hence the often-asked question, "What do you want on this paper?" Left to their own devices, they feel most comfortable with narrative or descriptive writing—not because there is anything intrinsically dualistic about those modes but because they are anchored in the material, concrete world as organized by either space or time. (I am of course excluding higher-level description of abstract entities.) And in fact many freshmen writers can produce good narrative and descriptive writing. It is when they move into discourse that is hierarchically structured and divorced from concrete reality that they run into difficulties writing balanced and carefully reasoned papers.

If students are at a primarily dualistic level of thinking, they will not advance to a relativistic position within the time they are in freshman composition; intellectual growth does not proceed that rapidly. What we can hope to do, however, is stimulate students to move over the course of a semester or two to a level of thinking just above the one at which they are presently functioning. Developmentalists call such approaches "plus-one staging," and they try systematically to offer students a series of what Sanford calls "challenges and supports." These strategies on the one hand confront students with the kinds of cognitive dissonance they must reconcile in order to move to the next level of intellectual development and, on the other, offer them a supportive environment as they engage in the struggle. Several studies have shown that such approaches are successful in producing measurable growth in intellectual functioning (see, for example, Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker). At the University of Nebraska, the ADAPT program has developed a Piagetian "learning cycle" that begins with the data out of which more abstract concepts emerge, whether those data are the acids and bases in the chemistry lab or the diaries of seventeenth-century Americans. Students then work in small groups with their own observations and those of their peers and ultimately formulate some concepts that fit the data. The next phase of the cycle has students apply those same concepts in a different setting to be sure that they have really grasped them. This approach emphasizes the student's active, inferential learning rather than the instructor's imparting of information (Fuller).

To use developmental concepts to help dualistic writers become more sensitive to their readers' differing belief systems, we might first work simply to increase their awareness of a reader's perspectives—no easy task. But we could, for example, pair up students who think differently on a given issue and have each try to learn as much as possible about the other's perspective. We could give them structures for interviewing each other and models of what a good interview was like. Students would write up the interview and then develop a "point-of-view" statement that the partner would agree fairly represented his ideas on this subject. Eventually, students would write out their own viewpoints, addressing their paper to their partners. Partners would then work together to critique each others' papers, rating every sentence or paragraph on a scale ranging from, "I violently disagree, and this really makes me mad because . . .," to, "As a result of what you say, I'm thinking about this in a new way." Struggling to become aware of the readers' viewpoint would challenge dualistic writers to grow intellectually by broadening their awareness of perspectives different from their own; structured concrete activities and peer work would give them support while they were doing so. Such an approach reflects one kind of activity that would challenge dualistic thinkers in one area of their writing; they would need others, and would need to go through such processes numbers of times, not just once. I should add that I suspect the particular adversative audience situation given subjects in our research study was too difficult for dualistic thinkers and that they would do better with an audience more like a group of peers—perhaps teenagers with a history of drunk driving.

A few researchers have begun to develop curricula and methods that apply developmental concepts to the composition classroom. Kurfiss has done some excellent work in this area ("Developmental Perspectives"), and Burnham has worked with expressive writing sequences based upon Perry Scheme concepts. Both Sternglass and Lunsford have developed curricula that utilize a Piagetian approach.

In closing, let me critique an aspect of my earlier paper that may mislead those interested in applying Perry Scheme ideas to the teaching of writing. In the first flush of my enthusiasm for the Perry Scheme, I rushed in where I should have feared to tread. That is, I had read Perry's book and several of his articles but was unaware of the enormous body of work done with the Perry Scheme since Perry's project at Harvard. I certainly had little idea of how complex a matter it is to assess students' Perry Scheme levels, nor was I aware of how slow progression through those levels is over the average college career.

In the years since that early paper, my enthusiasm for developmental approaches in general and the Perry Scheme in particular has increased, but I would no longer consider trying myself to assign precise Perry Scheme positions to student writers; making such assessments requires specialized knowledge of psychometrics and of the Perry Scheme. Several Perry Scheme rating rubrics are now available and have been successfully validated, but most of them can be utilized only by trained raters. The assessment process is expensive, but for anyone contemplat-

ing research on writing and the Perry Scheme, the expense is a necessary one. (For information about assessment, see the Perry Scheme *Newsletter*.)

For those more interested in teaching applications of the Perry Scheme, I would likewise issue a word of caution: certainly anyone familiar with the Perry Scheme can discern broad outlines of dualism and multiplicity in student papers. But to assign students narrowly into precise "positions" is risky business for we are probably not equipped to make such judgments. However, we can derive insights that will enable us to construct more enlightened writing curricula from a broad understanding of the sequence in which adult intellectual development takes place; we can also glean new insight into the reasons for many student difficulties with academic work, including writing. Additionally, developmental perspectives can help basic writing teachers with what is often their more general mission to prepare developmental students for success in college. I urge anyone interested in the topic to get into the literature and to start listening in new ways to what students tell us about how they view reality. Approached responsibly, such information can enable us to understand our students better and, understanding, to teach them more effectively.

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Janice Neuleib
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TEACHING GRAMMAR TO WRITERS

At a recent workshop for high school and community college teachers, an earnest young high school teacher explained forcefully to an experienced community college teacher that grammar was of no use in teaching writing. The high school teacher cited the now-famous Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer quotation. She said that knowing grammar had no effect on writing ability, insisting that "all the research" counterbalanced any intuitive and experiential evidence the older teacher might have to offer. The young teacher had, however, misquoted the passage; it says: "the teaching of *formal* [emphasis ours] grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" (37-38).

Taking the words *teaching of formal grammar* to mean *knowing grammar* is a serious mistake. What the research cited by Braddock et al., indicates is that instruction in traditional grammar over a limited period of time (a semester or less in the research studies being discussed) showed no positive effect on students' writing. In fact, several research studies and much language and composition theory argue for certain types of grammar instruction, when effective methods are used for clearly

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defined purposes. When writers learn grammar, as opposed to teachers merely "covering" it, the newly acquired knowledge contributes to writing ability.

In separate essays on grammar, both Kolln (139) and Neuleib (148) point out that the often-quoted passage in Braddock et al. was preceded by "Uncommon, however, is carefully conducted research which studies composition over an extended period of time" (37). Few people seem to pay attention to the qualification, however. Also, another 1963 study, one that Kolln reviews, has attracted much less notice than *Research in Written Composition.* Yet that other study, by Meckel, is more extensive and thorough in its conclusions and recommendations than is the Braddock work. Meckel's work shows that major questions still existed in 1963 about the teaching of grammar.[1]

Meckel points to three crucial issues (981): First, none of the grammar studies up to 1963 extended beyond one semester—"a time span much too short to permit development of the degree of conceptualization necessary for transfer to take place." Second, none of the studies had to do with editing or revising, that is "with situations in which pupils are recasting the structure of a sentence or a paragraph." Finally, none of the studies makes comparisons between students who had demonstrated knowledge of grammar and those of equal intelligence who had none.

Meckel's recommendations indicate that studies with systematic grammatical instruction ran too short a time or that the research involved presentation of rules without assured student comprehension. Meckel offers several important conclusions (981): (1) Although grammar has not been shown to improve writing skills, "there is no conclusive evidence, however, that grammar has *no* transfer value in developing composition skill." (2) More research needed to be done on "the kind of grammatical knowledge that may reasonably be expected to transfer to writing."[2] (3) Sometimes *formal grammar* has meant grammar without application; grammar should be taught systematically with applications. (4) "There are more efficient methods of securing *immediate* [Meckel's emphasis] improvement in the writing of pupils, both in sentence structure and usage, than systematic grammatical instruction." (5) Practice of forms improves usage whereas memorization of rules does not.

In spite of Meckel's work being little known, trends in the profession were confirming his conclusions. The years following 1963 were filled with sentence-combining research that showed statistically significant results on methods that relied on practice with forms (e.g., Mellon; O'Hare). This research culminated in the 1979 study by Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg in which college students made significant progress in writing, including surface structure and punctuation, without any kind of instruction except in sentence-combining exercises and essay writing. Sentence combining, a method of teaching grammar without explicit grammar instruction, fits with Meckel's earlier conclusion on the effectiveness of practice of forms as opposed to the learning of rules.

Shaughnessy in her 1977 *Errors and Expectations* developed a new method of helping students with writing by using grammar. Working

with open-admissions students, she developed a form of grammar instruction that has since been called error analysis. Error analysis fits with Meckel's recommendation that students work only on the errors in their own writing and not on rules external to that writing. Teachers gear instruction only to the needs of the students. Shaughnessy shows many error patterns which teachers can use to understand each student's needs. Shaughnessy offers an approach to error excluding formal grammar instruction, but including grammar at every step.

D'Eloia in the *Journal of Basic Writing* explained the reason for the grammatical approach to basic writing instruction introduced by Shaughnessy: ". . . something was radically wrong with the research design [of earlier studies which rejected grammar instruction] or with the instruction in grammar itself. . . . They [basic writing teachers] cannot bring themselves to believe that units combining the analysis of a grammatical principle with well-structured proofreading, imitation, paraphrase, and sentence consolidation exercises, and with directed writing assignments could fail to produce more significant results in both fluency and error control" (2). D'Eloia then offers applied grammar activities effective with basic writers similar to those in Shaughnessy's book.

More recently, Bartholomae in "The Study of Error" shows how instructors can discover error-producing language patterns in student writing. He shows that correcting these patterns requires special insight on the part of teachers. Says Bartholomae, "An error . . . can only be understood as evidence of intention. . . . A writer's activity is linguistic and rhetorical activity; it can be different but never random. The task for both teacher and researcher, then, is to discover the grammar of *that* [Bartholomae's emphasis] coherence . . ." (255).

Harris demonstrates this error-analysis approach to a specific problem. She shows that the fragmented free modifier can indicate linguistic growth. Rather than being a case for the red pencil, the fragmented free modifier is often a chance for a teacher to encourage growing linguistic strength. Being able, however, to recognize such indication of growth and using it to help a student develop requires sophisticated grammatical knowledge on the part of the teacher.

Student-centered approaches similar to those illustrated by Harris and Bartholomae demonstrate how grammar can be effectively used in teaching. Of course, merely covering grammar from a workbook would detract from student achievement. Teaching grammar from a traditional grammar text would be worse. DeBeaugrande explains why grammar texts do not teach students either grammar or writing. He argues that teachers need to understand grammar if they are to help improve students' writing. He attacks grammar textbooks, though, saying that they are written for and by grammarians who find the concepts easy since they "know what the terms mean" (358). He calls for a "learner's grammar" taught by techniques that are accurate, workable, economical, compact, operational, and immediate (364). He illustrates some of the techniques, many of which expand and extend Shaughnessy's and D'Eloia's patterns.

Shaughnessy, D'Eloia, Bartholomae, Harris, and DeBeaugrande all

illustrate how grammar instruction improves writing skills. Teachers, however, need grammatical knowledge to use the methods illustrated. To analyze errors and to discover language patterns, teachers need to do more than "cover" grammar. They need to be able to work out exercises of the types illustrated by Shaughnessy and D'Eloia, exercises patterned to students' individual language problems.

Yet, received knowledge in the profession seems to legislate in another direction. A few years ago, every time we did a workshop in the schools, teachers were shocked when we said that studies showed that teaching traditional grammar would not improve students' abilities as writers. More recently we have found many teachers too ready to assume that they can omit grammar instruction because it will not help students to write better. These assumptions are reinforced by journal articles which reject formal grammar instruction.[3]

This dismissal of grammar teaching is unfortunate not only because practice has shown that teachers must know grammar to analyze student errors but also because many questions regarding grammar instruction are worth studying. Fundamental questions concern what kind of grammar is being taught, how it is being taught, and what the rationale for that teaching is. Finally, we as a profession need to ask if we understand grammar and the nature of language.

In our opinion, the preparation of teachers is the crucial issue in teaching effectiveness. A confused teacher increases student perplexity. Arguing against the teaching of grammar in the lower grades, Sanborn tells of a teacher who was confused about the difference between a participle and a gerund: The teacher said "being" in "Being accused of something I didn't do made me mad" was a participle (73). Of course, traditional grammar is replete with ambiguities in its terminology. The term *participle* is ambiguous in that it is both a form term (for a verb) and a function term (modifying a noun, another ambiguity), and the term *gerund* is a function term (functioning in a nominal position) with an implied form (a verb form ending in -*ing*). If our profession had prepared the teacher well, she would have been aware of the ambiguities in the grammar. If some teachers want to teach eight parts of speech in English, for instance, they need to know that the parts of speech are defined neatly, sensibly, and logically by inflectional forms in Latin but that they are defined inconsistently and illogically by mixing form and function in English. Unless teachers are informed about the imperfections of traditional grammar, students will fail to understand it and thereby to learn and retain it.

Superficial retention became painfully obvious to us in a recent survey we conducted in an English grammar course required of upperclass students seeking teacher certification in English. At the beginning of the course, the prospective teachers filled out a questionnaire and took a test in grammar. The questionnaire asked when the prospective teachers had been taught grammar, what kind of grammatical activities they had had, and how they rated themselves on various types of grammatical knowledge. Of the twenty-four participants in the study, twenty-three

reported having studied grammar at two or more levels of schooling (elementary school, junior high, high school, college), and fifteen at three or more levels. All reported having learned grammar through a variety of activities such as diagramming sentences, memorizing grammatical terms and labeling parts of speech, identifying, and correcting grammatical errors, writing sentences and paragraphs with grammatical forms indicated, and so on. They also rated themselves rather high (mostly 3 or above on a scale of 1 to 5) in most grammatical skills listed, particularly in knowing names of and identifying parts of speech and parts of sentences, standard grammatical usage, and correct punctuation rules and applications.

The results of the grammar test, given with the questionnaire, however, indicated little retention of formal grammatical knowledge and an inability to apply grammar to editing problems. Only three out of twenty-four prospective teachers could accurately name the eight parts of speech—most of them could name four or five (usually noun, verb, adjective, adverb), but function terms like subject and object were mixed in. Most participants could name the two important parts of a sentence and count the number of sentences in a given passage taken from Warriner (58), but no one could accurately count the number of clauses in the paragraph. Some participants even counted fewer clauses than sentences. Although most of these prospective teachers knew what a verb was, only half the group could pick out a transitive verb, and no one could identify an intransitive verb. Only six could find the solitary passive verb in the passage. A prepositional phrase was easily identified, but only two participants correctly picked out an adverbial clause, and only four found an adjective clause. Quite a few people labeled phrases as clauses, apparently not knowing the difference between phrases, clauses, and sentences. Thus, an obvious discrepancy existed between the prospective teachers' perceptions of their formal grammar knowledge and their demonstrated knowledge.

The grammar test also contained two sentences which the participants were to punctuate. They also had to explain their reasons for using each punctuation mark as they did:

1. Please turn off the light its much too bright
2. I was anxious to go shopping but my mother who is usually so organized was taking her time today.

Only seven participants, less than a third of the group, could punctuate sentence 1 correctly; many either used a comma to separate the two clauses and/or neglected the apostrophe for *its*. With sentence 2, almost everyone separated the nonrestrictive clause with a pair of commas, and thirteen of them put a comma before *but*. As for providing the rules of punctuation, only three participants could explain the punctuation in sentence 1 in appropriate grammatical terms, and only one participant could do so for sentence 2. A number of the participants offered explanations involving pauses and meaning, while others misused grammatical terms. For the majority of these prospective teachers, therefore, punctuation rules had not been learned at the conscious opera-

tional level. Of course, we realize that the performance of this group of prospective teachers cannot be generalized to all students who have studied grammar, but having taught grammar to similar upperclass students in the last fifteen years, we can say that their lack of formal grammatical knowledge is typical.

We would like to suggest that the first step in increasing teachers' understanding of grammar is to develop a clear definition of the term. Theorists as disparate as Kolln and Hartwell stress the confusion in the definition of grammar. Kolln points out that the Braddock et al. report did not define "formal grammar," so conclusions could not be confirmed (292-93). In addressing this need for definition, Hartwell builds upon W. Nelson Francis's 1954 "Revolution in Grammar" to define five grammars: Grammar 1 is intrinsic knowledge of language rules and patterns that people use without knowing they use them; Grammar 2 is the linguistic science that studies the system of Grammar 1; Grammar 3 merely involves linguistic etiquette, such as calling "he ain't" bad grammar; Grammar 4 is "school grammar," the system that is oversimplified in traditional handbooks and workbooks; Grammar 5, stylistic grammar, uses grammatical terms to teach prose style, in the manner of Lanham, Williams, Christensen, and Strunk and White (Hartwell 109-110). Hartwell stresses that these five grammars often do not match. They are pieces of puzzles that fit into different pictures or that overlap untidily in the same picture. Without being aware of the mismatch between Grammar 4, "school grammar" and Grammar 1, intuitive grammar, many teachers teach Grammar 4 as if it made perfect sense.

We strongly feel that writing teachers need to study the historical background of grammar, be well-acquainted with better descriptions of language (that is, with Grammar 2, linguistic studies, as well as Grammar 5, stylistic grammar), and appreciate relations among different grammars. Still, teachers should not begin to teach linguistics in their writing classes. College level linguistics is not the solution for junior and senior high school students. Rather, when teachers understand how language works, they can make the description of the language accessible to students.

The challenge now is in the area of teacher training and retraining. At the end of the semester, the prospective teachers described in the study above had been exposed to the history of language study and to many of the concepts reviewed here. They went on to learn that to work with basic writers at any level, teachers have to do the hard part. They have to understand stylistic choices, and they have to analyze errors so that they can show students how language works. When teachers do more than "cover" grammar, writers will improve their writing by using the grammar they have learned.

Notes

[1]For a thorough review of the research, see Meckel; for a summary of Meckel's findings, see Kolln.

[2]Sentence-combining research represents at least one kind of grammatical knowledge that has proved to be transferable to writing. See Neuleib for a summary of sentence-combining research through that date.

[3]Hartwell's "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar" illustrates the sort of dismissal of grammar that encourages this attitude in teachers. Hartwell does mention error analysis, but in his conclusion he calls for a halt to all grammar research. The message teachers often carry from such an article is to abandon grammar instruction of any type.

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Alice S. Horning

THE TROUBLE WITH WRITING IS
THE TROUBLE WITH READING

The significance of the writing/reading relationship has recently been getting more attention in composition. For example, Linda Flower, at the 1984 CCCC meeting in New York, discussed her new investigation of reading protocols to go along with her writing protocol analyses. Sandra Stotsky, writing in the May, 1983 special issue of *Language Arts*, noted that we need case studies of basic writers to examine the nature of their abilities in both reading and writing. The case study approach elicits particularly interesting data which shed light on the reading/writing connection. Case studies can provide important diagnostic insights helpful to developmental writers, even though in small numbers they do not yield data susceptible to statistical analysis. Case studies can show clearly that developmental writers are in need of extensive help with reading and that reading and writing cannot and should not be taught separately.

The two case studies I present in this paper provide preliminary support for a hypothesis concerning the relationship between reading and writing: that specific syntactic and semantic difficulties in writing are related to reading problems in syntax and comprehension among basic writers. This claim may have important uses for both theory and practice. It suggests that developmental writers' overall literacy skills must be treated more holistically and that teachers should work toward larger

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literacy goals. In this context, the term *writing miscue* provides a rubric for the analysis of reading-related writing problems. *Writing miscues* can be defined as systematic mismatches between writer production and reader expectation.

The only work specifically examining writing miscues as defined here involved studies of fourth graders carried out by James Ney and his associates in the mid 1970s. Ney did a small study, using twenty-five subjects, in which he used conventional Reading Miscue Inventories (explained below) and had students generate writing using sentence-combining exercises. His findings show that different types of miscues occurred in reading and writing, with writing specifically showing more omissions, and reading more additions and substitutions. The results in the two cases I present in this paper show a different outcome, not surprising since the students I discuss are older than Ney's subjects and their writing samples derive from regular writing assignments rather than sentence-combining exercises. Furthermore, the omissions Ney observed are probably provoked by the nature of the sentence-combining and unlikely to occur in free composition. Although neither Ney nor anyone else has pursued the idea of writing miscues as far I have been able to find, I hope to show here that it appears to be a particularly fruitful line of investigation.

Two other studies related to the issue of reading/writing interaction are those of Patrick Hartwell and David Bartholomae. Though Hartwell's purpose was to demonstrate that nonstandard dialects do not cause interference in writing, Hartwell provides significant evidence of the relationship between reading and writing. The two aspects of literacy are related by Hartwell's concept of a "print code":

> The term *print code*, as used here, is seen to identify a layered set of cognitive abilities, stretching from matters of surface detail to abstract expectations and strategies for processing print as reader and writer. Literate readers and writers, for example, have mastered the meaning relationships signalled by punctuation, while developing readers and writers will exhibit, in their writing and their reading, only partial mastery of that system. (23-24)

Hartwell goes on to cite a number of studies which support his position and the concept of writing miscues.

Like Hartwell, David Bartholomae was investigating the nature of error in basic writing. In "The Study of Error," Bartholomae presents a case study of John, a basic writer. While this writer has significant difficulties, he corrects many of his written errors and makes his text sensible when he reads it aloud. John has, in other words, a great many writing miscues. Like Bartholomae, I believe that these writing miscues are systematic in nature and that we are likely to have greatest success with basic writers if we view their work with the "print code" from the reading and writing perspectives together.

Before I turn to the individual cases I report here, I would like to offer some background on the data I collected. At Oakland University,

all entering students take the College Board's test of Reading Comprehension of the *Descriptive Tests of Language Skills* for placement in writing courses. Many also choose to write an optional short essay. Both students I discuss here placed into the developmental writing course I was assigned to teach. Early in the semester, I asked all students in the course to volunteer to complete a *Reading Miscue Inventory.*

The *Reading Miscue Inventory* (RMI) is the work of Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke. Completing an RMI involves the student's reading a substantial passage aloud while being audiotaped, and afterwards retelling the content of the passage. The RMI provides a method of analyzing all of the reader's deviations from what appears on the printed page. These deviations are called miscues. Miscue analysis is well-established in the literature of psycholinguistics and reading, having been thoroughly researched by Kenneth Goodman and many others. For the case studies I report here, students read a newspaper profile of F. Alden Shaw, founder and teacher at Detroit Country Day School in Michigan, published in the *Detroit Free Press.* The article is about eight hundred words long and contains a total of seventy-two sentences.

Volunteers came to my office and read the Shaw material aloud while I taped them on a cassette recorder and took notes on both their reading and their behavior as they worked through the text. Here is the opening paragraph as a sample of the passage:

> He no longer walks the halls regularly as he once did, but his small, comfortably plump figure is familiar to students at Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills. "Hi, Mr. Shaw," said the little girl with a shy smile to the courtly old gentleman in a pin-striped suit complete with vest and long-sleeved white shirt. He walks briskly along, but with the aid of a four-foot metal cane. Her greeting is repeated up and down the halls of the expansive, modern building set on 33 rolling acres at Thirteen Mile and Lahser. F. Alden Shaw is as much an institution as the school he founded and ran for nearly half a century. The two, Shaw and Detroit Country Day School, are virtually synonymous. (Briggs-Bunting 3A)

Once the taped reading and retelling were completed, I used the standard RMI scoring sheet to record all of the reader's deviations from the printed text. Though the RMI is a context-free exercise, which makes it different from writing (and students reading their own writing, as in Bartholomae's study), it provides one window through which to view the reader interacting directly with a text. That process, albeit in isolation, is revealing for writing instruction.

The students' writing assignments provide the additional data for my study. My goal in the developmental writing course, is to help each student reach the point where he or she can write 250-300 words of grammatically correct, organized English which explain or develop a clearly worded thesis. To reach this goal, students complete between thirty and thirty-five writing assignments during the term. Some of these are just

one paragraph long, and some are revisions or expansions of earlier papers. In addition, students receive instruction in reading activities relevant to writing (such as those described in Horning) and some grammar instruction. In class, there is much discussion of writing strategies and techniques for development, paragraph organization, and so on. Although in this essay I present only three writing samples, they represent fairly the work of these individuals. (I use the test scores and samples of written work with the students' written consent; initials protect privacy.)

The first case study is that of Ms. BC, which provides an example of a writer with significant syntactic difficulties in writing and problems with grammatical relationships in reading. Table 1 in the Appendix summarizes BC's scores and reveals some of her problems.

BC's Reading Comprehension score reveals some serious problems with reading. The RMI further supports this claim. Not only did BC have an exceptionally difficult time reading the passage, but she also took quite a bit longer to read it than did other students who completed the RMI. The RMI provides no way of coding a problem with intonation marking the ends of sentences so, in this analysis, a simple count was made of the number of times BC came to the end of a sentence and read it with rising intonation or flat intonation rather than with the customary falling intonation. As Table 1 in the Appendix shows, this inappropriate intonation pattern appeared on 29% of the sentence boundaries in the passage in BC's reading.

The scoring of the RMI provides three levels of grammatical acceptability. First, some miscues may be completely appropriate to the grammatical structure of the sentence. Second, some miscues may be partly acceptable with either the prior or following portions of the sentences. A third possibility are miscues which are completely unacceptable in the structure of the sentence. As Table 1 shows, all miscues which are inappropriate grammatically, both partially unacceptable miscues and completely unacceptable miscues, are grouped together in the "grammatically inappropriate" category, which represents 49% of the miscues in BC's RMI.

Perhaps an example will be helpful at this point. In the text, a sentence in the second paragraph on Country Day's academic requirements reads: "And Latin, the nemesis of generations, is still offered as an elective." BC read this as follows ($ is an RMI coding convention for reader-invented word forms): "And Latin, the $intimas and $generacy is still often an elevate." Following this rendering, BC made no attempt to reread or correct her miscues. Because the invented forms cannot be judged for grammatical function, they are scored as grammatically unacceptable. The substitution of *often* for *offered* is scored as partially acceptable grammatically because it fits with the portion of the sentence preceding it. Overall, this example demonstrates both BC's difficulty with the passage and the scoring of grammatical acceptability.

Once the RMI is complete, several patterns can be found among the scores for each miscue. One of these is the pattern for grammatical rela-

tionships. Goodman and Burke describe the grammatical relationships pattern this way:

> The questions of the Reading Miscue Inventory which determine *correction* (Question 6), *grammatical acceptability* (Question 7), and *semantic acceptability* (Question 8) are interrelated to produce patterns which give insight into how concerned the reader is that his [sic] oral reading sounds like language. . . . There are eighteen possible patterns produced by interrelating these three questions. The patterns have been categorized according to the degree to which they indicate the reader's strength in using the grammatical and meaning cueing systems, and are listed under the headings of "Strength," "Partial Strength," "Weakness," and "Overcorrection." (RMI 71)

In BC's RMI, 46% of her miscues reflect a weakness in grammatical relationships of this kind. In particular, this pattern reflects an almost total lack of correction of miscues by BC. Good readers will reread portions of text in which they have generated a miscue if the miscue makes a significant change in the meaning or grammatical structure of the text. BC, in contrast, rarely corrected any miscue she generated. Thus, BC demonstrates a significant problem with grammatical relationships in reading.

In addition to her problem with grammatical relationships, BC's reading shows a pattern in comprehension. BC's comprehension patterns show a 38% loss of comprehension. This difficulty is illustrated further by her score of 24% on the retelling portion of the RMI which calls for the reader to sum up the reading by recalling as many details and specifics as possible. (I devised, and asked of each student, a standard set of prompt questions.) BC, then, is a reader who has serious problems with the process of getting meaning from print, and she seems to have particular difficulty making use of the grammatical cues to meaning in written text.

BC's writing reflects the problems with syntactic structure found in her reading. Here are two samples of BC's writing, written in response to two different assignments early in the term:

Sample A

The Oakland Sail is a news paper that cover most of the thing that go on at Oakland University.

This new paper sends reporter out on the campus to talk to the student body. It is a good way to find out what is going on, and to let other see what's going on in the student body eye's.

The paper tell you various things going on at the campus using the paper you will find that it can help you to see what is going on I get a Oakland Sail paper each time it come out just to find out what is going on.

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Sample B

The room that I stay in is plain it has know life: it was made for two people it has two beds in it. My room is very depressing after awhile you have to get out of the room and walk. You can hear every thing that go on around your room. It has an outside door that is share by four people we have one bathroom inside this room made for four people. It is like living in a rat hole with a lot of little rat running all over you. This is my room.

I have made some corrections of spelling to remove distractions from the point of presenting these samples. These two samples together provide a total of seventy-two sentences, used for comparison to the reading passage, which also contained seventy-two sentences. In BC's sentences, as noted in Table 1, 46% of the sentence boundaries were inappropriate (run-ons, comma splices or other problems in punctuation), and 34% of the sentences show inappropriate syntactic relationships, a category which includes problems of agreement and related matters. Each of BC's writing errors, though, seems to represent a mismatch of reader expectation and her actual production. Syntactic deviations yield readily to this kind of analysis and an inventory of the possible patterns of deviation, similar to those in the RMI, might be developed in future research. (Semantic deviations, discussed in WM's case, below, are not quite so straightforward, but would be likely to yield patterns also.) Looking for and finding such patterns is useful diagnostically and pedagogically, as Bartholomae has said. The difficulties which appear in BC's reading also appear in her writing, and these weaknesses lend support for the position that reading and writing cannot reasonably be separated if students are expected to develop competency in writing.

Mr. WM's work provides further support for the importance of working on reading and writing simultaneously. WM presents an example of a student with difficulties in the semantic or meaning aspects of printed language. My purpose here is not to compare WM to BC, for they present rather different aspects of the connections between reading and writing. However, WM's reading ability is, like BC's, fairly weak, and his problems as indicated by his score on the Reading Comprehension test are further documented by the results of his RMI. I present different information drawn from WM's RMI because, unlike BC, WM's chief difficulty lies in semantics rather than in syntax. WM does have some problems with syntax as the writing sample below will show, but they are not problems of the magnitude of those of BC. Table 2, in the Appendix, summarizes WM's reading scores and some of his problems.

WM's difficulty with getting meaning from print is suggested by the nature of the semantic problems with his miscues. Like the syntactic analysis of miscues, the semantic analysis may show a miscue which is acceptable given the meaning of the rest of the sentence, or which is partially acceptable, or which is unacceptable in terms of the meaning of the sentence. In WM's case, 60% of his miscues were either partly or completely unacceptable semantically. An example of one such miscue

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occurred in a sentence (in the same passage read by BC and described above) which read: "We have to develop a system where people can't *simply be* shoved along." WM read the sentence as follows: "We have to develop a system where people can't *simplify by* shoved along." This miscue is unacceptable semantically in this sentence. Some 60% of WM's miscues were either partially or completely unacceptable semantically, indicating that, as Goodman and Burke say, "the success with which the reader is producing understandable structures" is limited (RMI 60).

Another aspect of WM's problem with meaning in print is illustrated by the 51% of miscues which alter meaning, as shown in Table 2. In analyzing miscues for meaning change, the focus shifts from acceptability to the question of whether the miscue has changed the meaning of the sentence as the author intended it. It is possible to have a miscue like the "simplify by" example above which alters the meaning to a minimal degree, one which changes the meaning completely, or one which does not change meaning at all. In WM's RMI, 51% of his miscues showed a partial or extensive meaning change.

Given these difficulties, it is not surprising to find that WM's overall loss of comprehension is at 40%, and his retelling at 20%. The comprehension pattern, again, is determined by looking at the relationship of the questions of correction, semantic acceptability, and meaning change. Overall, WM's reading suggests that he has serious difficulty understanding when he reads. And, again like BC, WM's problem with printed text turns up in his writing. Unfortunately, semantic difficulties in writing do not yield the same kind of numerical analysis that syntactic problems do, so no statistics are available to report on WM's problem expressing his ideas in writing. But here is a single sample of his writing, which reveals the sort of problem he has deciding what he means, and staying with his point:

Comparison of Two Girls

I have met one of the girls I know for four years is a nice sweet and generous young lady that I had a pleasure of meeting at my four years of high school. The other person I met as a very sure person, but she always gets herself in trouble doing things that she isn't capable of messing with. One of the girls I met is very smart, charming, and she belongs to a club in high school the same club I am in. She likes to go places with us, and go on trips, picnics and movies around the state.

The other person is trying to get every boyfriend in the world. Always trying to find the perfect man for her, quitting one person and going on to another, it keeps on going. She always is being treated like a dog, or like someone is trying to jump on her. She shouldn't be telling her friends about other people's business. She nearly was jumped on by my sister and a few of her friends because she was telling other people's business. She is lucky one of her friends got her out of this mess. Otherwise she would be in deep trouble.

The nice girl never got in any trouble, yet she never does crazy things like the other person did. She is a member of the national honor society, President of the senior class, and she is involved in plays, clubs and activities. I graduated with her this year. For any reason she is reaching her goal to get her education and stay out of trouble. She has a lot of friends that admire her and are around her. One thing about her never say that this person does a lot of things for the school.

The other person she is a very smart person, but she hasn't done well in high school. She graduated from junior high school with high marks, came to senior high school skipping her classes. She isn't going anywhere skipping class and being with your friends hanging out of the class room. The mark is very low because she doesn't want to go to class. School is about going to class for an education.

The nice person did the right thing staying in school, graduating with good marks and going to college for an education and to find a good job. She stays out of trouble of course. The other person never changes, or being the same person. If she can stay out of trouble, and go to class everyday that student will have a successful career.

WM's essay begins as a standard comparison/contrast paper, but it rapidly comes apart as WM has more and more trouble keeping separate the two people he discusses. A mismatch occurs between the reader's expectation of a discussion of similarities and differences, and the writer's loss of focus and separation of his points. The focus seems to get away from WM: he is clearly biased toward the better student, but he contradicts himself by saying that she "does a lot of things for the school." Part of the weakness in this writing is the absence of a conventional structure, and the usual guideposts to help readers see the writer's point: thesis, transitions, summary, and so on. By the end of the paper, it is not clear what WM has really compared, or what kernel of the truth he wants to present. Indeed, the point in the last sentence is not clearly related to anything preceding it. These deviations would show up as a pattern in a Writing Miscue Inventory, a pattern that may appear repeatedly in WM's writing.

The confusion and contradictions evident in WM's writing turned up also in his attempt at retelling the reading passage for his RMI. In the retelling, he contradicts both the substance of the passage and himself several times. WM does not handle meaning well, whether he is involved in deriving meaning from print in reading, or encoding meaning into print in writing. This difficulty should be addressed in teaching WM both reading and writing strategies and in teaching them together.

These two case studies provide much detail concerning the problems that two individual students have with text. These cases offer a preliminary confirmation of my hypothesis: there is a relationship

between specific kinds of writing and reading problems. Additional case studies and RMIs may yield a body of data that can be analyzed statistically and that might produce firm evidence of correlations between specific reading and writing problems. Although the data provided here are only suggestive, writing teachers need to recognize the relevance of reading to writing and to begin to integrate the relationship in their teaching.

Teachers might achieve this integration of reading and writing by using a collaborative approach in a developmental class. The teacher can ask students to do their own analyses of the writing problems, perhaps exchanging with one another. When students alternate between being writers and being readers, the shifts in focus can help them see their own writing from both perspectives. Students who learn about readers' needs for structure and predictability in text in these ways are likely to become better writers.

A second course of action, suggested by both the Goodmans' research and Bartholomae's study, is to have students conduct RMI-type exercises and analyses of their writing. The concept of "miscues" removes the attitudinal and emotional stigma of error and could lead students to greater independence and effectiveness as readers and writers. In the long run, students need to become capable of making their own judgments in reading and writing: such independence in relation to text is a significant definition of literacy.

A third possibility which can support both of the preceding approaches is to use a text that incorporates a specific reading-writing focus. An excellent example of the sort of text I have in mind is Readers as Writers by Kate Kiefer. This text, which includes readings, asks student writers to consider the nature of the reading process and ways in which they respond to the texts. This awareness becomes the focus of writing exercises provided in the book. The readings, including student work, are very well chosen; an instructor wanting a text that builds reading strongly into written work should find the book an excellent support tool.

The two cases discussed here lend support to the proposal made at the outset, that *writing miscues* can be an appropriate way to analyze writing errors in a reading context. Students' writing can be examined for such systematic errors, and such examination might lead to the development of a Writing Miscue Inventory to parallel the RMI already developed and highly regarded in reading studies. The inventories might be used together, to gain insight into the nature of the individual's processes and strategies for dealing with text, and to diagnose weaknesses in those strategies that warrant instruction. Instead of identifying errors like run-ons, a Writing Miscue Inventory would show the patterns writers are using, and their strengths and weaknesses in helping readers get meaning from their texts. Remediation of writing problems must accompany remediation of reading problems in cases like the ones described here. The concept of writing miscues, in conjunction with reading miscues, may help teachers assist students toward becoming proficient writers.

Table 1

Case 1: BC

Reading Comprehension Test   Raw score 15/45=33%

                                            Percentile 7

Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI)

Total miscues	149
Sentence boundaries with inappropriate intonation	29%
Grammatically inappropriate miscues	49%
Weakness in grammatical relationship	46%
Overall loss of comprehension	38%
Retelling score	24%

Writing Sample

Inappropriate sentence boundaries	46%
Inappropriate syntactic relationship	34%

Table 2

Case 2: WM

Reading Comprehension Test   Raw score 16/45=36%

                                  Percentile 7

Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI)

Total miscues	53
Semantically inappropriate miscues	60%
Miscues which alter meaning	51%
Overall loss of comprehension	40%
Retelling score	20%

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Sandra Schor

AN ALTERNATIVE TO REVISING: THE PROLEPTIC GRASP

Much has been said about keeping classroom practice responsive to composition theory. I think we might do well now to turn our glasses around; in our studies of revision it is time to keep theory responsive to classroom practice. In particular, I propose a few alternatives to revising, since in the writing classroom, especially among inexperienced writers, revision remains an obsession of the teacher and an uncertain code of gesture and consent for the student.

In the past decade, we English teachers, by encouraging our students to slip draft after draft through the gears of the grading machine, have made progress in removing the suspicion that every piece of writing done for a college class conceals some kind of test. Students have taken to this change with varying degrees of discomfort: Well, they say, if you *were* grading this draft, what would it get? Will the piece ever be finished? How will I know? Somehow the teacher's new generosity is more like an outmoded practicality. In an age of disposable pens and instant copies the idea of redoing a piece of writing to make it more complete and durable carries the whiff of another, less technological, age. Nonetheless, we make it clear among our students that drafting is what we are doing, and that we all are to understand a draft to be organic and burgeoning, rather than merely adjustable and correctable. The students are very good about acknowledging this notion and dutifully write across the tops of their papers, *Draft #1* or *Draft #2*.

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For many years, I went about making my assignments carefully, using class time to discover the indwelling potential of each assignment, so that students would leave the classroom already well advanced into the abundant possibilities of the essay in process. Then I expected the assignment on "A Confrontation with an Authority Figure" or "A Childhood Injustice" or "A Turning Point in My Life" or "A Popular Misconception" to be turned in as a sequence of drafts, each successive one taking into account the observations I and the students in the class had made on the preceding draft. What I expected was the humanizing of a piece of writing through the responses of many readers.

What I got all too often, however, were identical essays, almost machine replicas of each other save for miraculously tiny insertions, and I have written elsewhere (Schor) about the monkish practices of students who faithfully recopy a text simply to insert "I was eight years old when we moved to Astoria" into the second paragraph, or to change "My landlord said" to "My landlord shouted" as a response to the teacher's specific request for tone and color. Everything else in the manuscript was unaltered—unalterable, in fact, to the mind of a student writer whose teacher has given no recipe, no exact ingredients in a vague, if wholesome, regimen of revision. After perhaps five years of such expectations, I recognized that my students revised only in obedience to what I wanted and were restricted in fact by whatever instruction I had actually phrased in the margins or at the end of the piece of writing. Unless I specifically wrote "How old were you when you moved to Astoria?" or "I'd like to hear your landlord's tone of voice when he threw you out," my advice went unattended.

Since then I have been recreating the syllabus for my basic writing classes.

These classes more often than not are of basic writers who have a rudimentary degree of linguistic fluency but little experience in the intellectual development of an idea and less understanding of the requirements of academic writing. Their writing may appear grossly competent in syntax, usage, and the formal changes of words. Though their writing is far from error-free—exhibiting missing *-ed* or *-s* endings, inexact sentence boundaries, and unstable referencing—its medium is the sentence and English idiom is recognizable. However, these writers are truly basic in their inability to confront an idea and pursue its rhetorical and intellectual sources and consequences. My evolving syllabus now depends little on rewriting as my students came to define it for me—repeating a drafted piece of writing for the purpose of making specific insertions of detail, illustration, or explanation. In short I am trying to get rid of increment as sacrament.

The new syllabus recognizes that inexperienced writers gain a good deal of insight into how writers behave by substituting real writing activities for the swollen expectations of "Revise this essay." First, I believe with Bruner and the Russian psychologist Zeigarnik (Bruner 119) in the so-called Zeigarnik Effect, that a task is best executed and remembered when it is interrupted. I have been asking my students to write a crash-

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through draft of a whole essay—a sort of nonstop fastwriting—sketching in whatever comes to their minds as they attempt to get something on paper. Then I immediately interrupt their attempt by asking them to write one piece of the essay as a way of producing in them a more exact anticipation of the whole, what I call the proleptic grasp. Their spontaneous choice of subject for this "piece" of the whole often directs them to their true concerns. I offer back-up encouragement to students who find it difficult to arrive at a partial subject by suggesting that they write their own definition for a term or concept that dominates their fastwrite. These preliminary forays take various structures and call on the imagination in distinct ways, the writing of the parts always strengthened by the crisscrossing supports of the partially seen whole. In Chapter 6, called "The Will to Learn," of *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (119), Bruner explains the Zeigarnik tendency toward completeness:

> In brief, tasks that are interrupted are much more likely to be returned to and completed, and much more likely to be remembered, than comparable tasks that one has completed without interruption. But that puts the matter superficially, for it leaves out of account one fact that is crucial. The effect holds only if the tasks that the subject has been set are ones that have a structure—a beginning, a plan, and a terminus. If the tasks are 'silly' in the sense of being meaningless, arbitrary, and without visible means for checking progress, the drive to completion is not stimulated by interruption.

That the whole is only partially and inadequately seen in no way limits its usefulness. Quite the contrary. We make our best inferences from partial information, inferences which lead us into a new partnership between information and intuition. Seeing the whole too soon mistakes coverage for completeness and miscellany for mastery. The practice of anticipating the whole at the same time that we avoid it engages the writer in finding expression for unexpected and surreptitious elements—too often mistaken for digressions—so that a work finally begins to express more than the writer knows. In "The Poet" Emerson says that the intellect "delights in detachment and boundary." I have seen that it does. We continually stretch ourselves in the limitations of a detached idea. Yet the preliminary attempt to set down some kind of whole imprints traces of the whole on our unrealized memories. The coherence of an inexhaustible subject is like the child's awareness of a higher adult life, inexhaustibly there, remote and misunderstood for a long while, yet inevitably structuring his outcome.

Here are a few examples of what I mean by a proleptic grasp. In a narrative essay about a confrontation with an authority figure, after the first fastwriting on the subject, I ask the entire class to write their definitions of *authority*. One class's impromptu definitions included these: someone who gives the rules; someone who has power or is in charge; a person whose knowledge makes her opinion more valuable; someone who forces his ideas on an individual; a figure who overpowers us; a

psychological feeling we have about another person's power; power because of ownership or money (this one led further to power because of good looks, athletic ability, physical strength, having a gun, being smart, etc.); an official appointed by the government to serve the public; someone or something with the power to decide the fate of others because of expertise or legal or official sanction; being a king or a queen; having power to do a certain thing at a certain moment. We throw all these on the board and together study the nuances, say, between "giving the rules" and "deciding our fate" or "having power" and "having power to do a certain thing at a certain moment." Then I ask the students to bring to the next class a dialogue between themselves and the authority figure they have had to confront. These dialogues are acted out by pairs of students. The class's responses to the dialogues intuitively invoke references to the stock of definitions the class has accumulated, each of us attempting to detect in the voice and circumstances of the characters one or another of the definitions, now suddenly in operation.

I make a point of introducing the next assignment before this one has been completed, being careful whenever I can to devise assignments in pairs, one of which resonates against the other. These pairs have been a rewarding dividend for me in that the written assignments that result from them show greater depth and significantly more private thought. So I next ask the students to begin thinking about a new assignment: to prod their memories for an instance of a childhood injustice. We interrupt our work on the authority narrative to hear exploratory freewritings on instances of injustice, the meaning of injustice, what it feels like to be the victim of injustice—raising questions along the way, such as, Is racial injustice personal? When does parental love become injustice?—only to discover that injustice can be laid to uncertain claims of authority over a victim (the injustices in my classes typically involve either a teacher who won't listen or a traffic cop). The "injustice" idea trails associations of authority misapplied. Meanwhile, the students are still working to complete a draft of the narrative on authority, but they have by now become a bit shrewder about authority—earned, assigned, inherited, and purloined. They are able to make continuing distinctions because the entire class has been working in a collaborative intensity on abundant and recursive distinctions, keeping the interest suspended for the duration of the writing. They have had time to generate enthusiasm for their subject.

About two weeks after the first crash-through, a narrative essay on authority finally comes in. I find that the essays tend to be longer than I am accustomed to getting, and rich with the voices of the antagonists, acting out their inquiry into the meaning of authority. In short, the writer has an increased capacity to locate in several adjacent assignments an essay that shelters an idea already substantially developed.

In assignments that are not narrative, we apply the same principles. In an essay on "A Turning Point" students fastwrite the entire paper and then slow down. Again, we interrupt and divide our attention between this assignment and a related one. In this case, the seed sentence Marie

Ponsot and Rosemary Deen use in *Beat Not the Poor Desk* (Ponsot 71-74), "Once I was ————; now I am—————" provides an important lesson in the difference between an essay whose parts are coordinate and an essay having a major part with subordinate parts. They write the "Once/Now" essays evenhandedly, both parts receiving equivalent emphases. But once they progress from that to the "Turning Point" they suddenly face up to the question, *Why?* Why did the turning point occur? What did it lead to? Does one period overshadow the other? The students suspend the unfolding of the whole essay until they clearly know, having discovered it in the writing up of the separate parts, whether one element is dominant. Usually it is.

In an assignment that deals with the analysis of a popular myth or misconception, I again ask for a fastwrite. The misconception essay develops as a result of careful class discussion into a two-part essay: the misconception and the reality. We throw on the board as many topics as there are students in the class: "It is a misconception that courage involves death in battle and acts of heroism." "It is a misconception that money brings happiness," as well as its popular converse, "It is a myth that the best things in life are free." After a page or two stating the misconception, including a student's illustrative examples from life, the overpowering drift is towards the writer's clarification of the reality. Here it is imperative that the writer phrase the reality as an assertion and not a denial: "Happiness comes from love, respect, and work" and not: "Money doesn't bring happiness." "Courage requires facing up to dread through duty" and not: "You don't have to be heroic to be courageous." Then I take as one day's writing assignment the development in full of the misconception. What is it precisely that you believe to be the mistaken view of courage? of the clergy? of money? We do not dwell on narrations or descriptions first, as basic tasks—they are not basic tasks. Rather, we try to behold the center of the miscue, that courage, say, has too long been associated only with death in battle and acts of heroism. What happens after several writings is that the writer can accurately describe the misconception and displace it—in this case displace the obligatory heroism with a two-part notion of courage, as one student did: courage requires first, that dread be inflicted upon us, and second, that despite the dread we face up to our duty, thereby opening the essay to a more personal rendering of the meaning of courage. This kind of care in analysis emerges from the inside out. The struggle to describe what courage is not, matures the writer's understanding of what courage is.

In these assignments writers can come to understand intuitively that an essay is an organism. They come to rely on having several opportunities to individualize their writing through patient composition but just as often through sudden sparks of insight that link up the parts. Erratic shortcuts and loving longcuts evolve into presentations that go beyond the usual slapdash beginner's essay. Questions of motivation are natural as one's characters carry on a dialogue, the exchange of talk insisting on question and answer; classification inheres in writing definitions; relationships surface as soon as two parts are put side by side; a page describing

the setting of an event is often a graph of the writer's emotions; an abundance of particulars implies what is general and overarching; and the repertory of the class extends the habits of the individual. And so these proleptic forays teach a good deal of what it means to anticipate a piece of writing by grappling with the parts that are exhibited, even in the weakest and most provisional whole. One of Confucius's tenets shows a connection between the completion of a thing and self-completion, effecting a union between the external and the internal. Our students begin to project a self as they gather elements of thought into completion.

Secondly, I have also discovered that students need the support of certain heuristic elements of grammar *as* they conceive their drafts. Here I part with many of our researchers into revision who advise delaying the correction of grammar until the draft is closer to the writer's satisfaction. Yes, delay the teensy inflectional forms until the content is defined, but certain large grammatical provinces, such as tense, point of view, modalities of should/would/could, and large structural parallelisms assist the inexperienced writer to make a construct out of what he or she thinks. This grammatical blueprint gives form to the earliest construction.

For example, the essential distinction between the present tense of the generalization and the past tense of an illustrative anecdote is crucial. That trip between present and past describes the two parts of the essay. In a similar way, working within a parallelism rewards the writer who seeks order for her ideas. In a work of art, such a parallelism may be the expression of the artist's uniqueness in his or her unconscious bringing together dissimilar forms or intensities and yoking them into identical service. The framing language, on the surface a trivial and seemingly accidental thing, similarly becomes the unmistakable form of the speaker.

And, finally, inexperienced writers gain insight into how writers behave by writing several adjacent essays about the same subject (White). Students are often embarrassed because they have only one interest or one idea, but which of us has not prayed for the blessing of one subject in a lifetime? They unfold their subject gradually through the formal requirements of an appropriate structure, thereby developing the writer's ability to expatiate on an idea. Continued exploration of a subject permits the writer to feel the changing relation of content and form. It discourages the stock response. It fights facile attitudes. It discovers the connection between feeling and mind. The intensity of sustaining effort over several assignments provides the writer with what is often his or her first mastery over a subject. Thus, during one semester Joan wrote about her parents as authority figures, then on the injustice of her parents who unwittingly dulled her childhood curiosity. Confusing love with overprotection, they muffled her in stories and inaccuracies about such natural events as death and tonsillectomies. Then she did a turning point essay on her realization that she had a scientific bent and that her parents would have destroyed it had she not insisted on going to a science high school. Jay on the other hand wrote narratively about his experiences wrestling; described his involvement in wrestling as the turning point

in his life; and wrote eloquently and analytically about the myths that wrestling is (a) a sport for human baboons and (b) a gay sport. Neither student nor teacher tires of the subject as it becomes richer and more complex with each new form. The freshness of each attempt does away with psychological perseverance, which occurs when a piece of writing freezes into an immutable form and the writer is incapable of repossessing it, already disowned as it is by the act of having been handed in too soon as a completed assignment.

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A QUESTIONING VOICE: INSTRUCTORS AND BASIC WRITERS INTERACT

Ten years have passed since Mina Shaughnessy explained in *Errors and Expectations* that the real job of the writing teacher is not to correct students' mistakes but to see the "intelligence" of them and to "harness that intelligence in the service of learning" (11). Since then, we have come a good distance in our thinking—or at least in our theorizing. We know that the intelligence behind students' errors represents a struggle to express equally intelligent meaning, and that complex thoughts are easily derailed by lapses in the academic code. As Nancy Sommers says, many of us formerly "read with our preconceptions and preoccupations, expecting to find errors," and, therefore, "misread our students' texts" (154). By only correcting errors, many of us reinforced the notion that rightness is all, and we helped reticent writers become blocked writers; nothing could be written right, so nothing was written. The prose that overcorrected students managed to squeeze out, they protected; they believed that change meant correction, and many corrections meant many errors.

In recent years, writing programs nationwide have begun to meet the challenge of convincing inexperienced writers that writing *is* revising, and that revising is more than the correction of an error-riddled essay. Today we hope to free students from the fear of error, while we still foster a respect for good, clear prose. We now encourage students to rethink their own work independently—within bounds of convention that must be taught and learned. Teaching is not looking for errors, but it is not overlooking them either. We have to sense when to allow error "in the

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service of learning" and when to call a mistake "wrong." In short, we must instruct students in the writing process without dictating what is to be written.

To meet this challenge in the basic writing classroom, the University of Massachusetts Freshman Writing Program adopted for its basic writing course a modified version of the laboratory method first described by Roger Garrison in his unpublished manuscript, "Teaching Writing, An Approach to Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition." In highly structured and closely supervised writing laboratories, students and instructor meet five hours a week in one-on-one workshops. They work through a series of writing assignments, from process through description to analysis. Students follow an established series of five steps for each essay they write. They are instructed to choose a topic; brainstorm in rough words, phrases and/or sentences as many facts, ideas, and impressions about their subject as come to mind; order their notes; write a first draft of the assignment; and revise the draft. Students are required to show the instructor each step before proceeding to the next.

The initial "brainstorming" activity—not composing paragraphs but simply jotting down ideas—frees reticent, inexperienced writers from anxieties about sentence structure, punctuation, and diction. Even the most blocked writers can manage words and phrases. (ESL students—many of whom are sophisticated composers who have difficulty, not in producing ideas, but in producing English sentence structures—can practice roughing out sentences in the less threatening environment of idea sheets and lists.) Everyone learns that writing down ideas, as Garrison points out, *is* writing; that the first step in the composing process is not imagining a full-blown essay but accumulating the raw material of meaning.

In the one-on-one workshops, basic writing students also learn that writing does not happen instantaneously or even linearly. It happens as they draft an essay much shorter or scantier than they meant and discover that essays grow, not as new material is appended, but as they return to rebrainstorm, reorder, redraft. We encourage beginning writers to spend time at their brainstorming and ordering activities, because it is there that they discover the naturalness of revision. As idea sheets become more and more easy to create, they become easier to junk. And as students make and scrap lists, they discover that the clutter and chaos of their thoughts is constructive.

Because our final goal is to give students their own writing processes, we work to convince our instructors to do this. Thus our first goal is to minimize the teacher's role and maximize the student's role. This does not mean we give over all the influence that comes to us from experience, but it does mean we surrender our authority over our students' texts. Ironically, while the five-step process we use affords instructors a format for intervention, it also affords us maximum opportunity to "take over" students' writing. By inclination, any tutorial model can easily become teacher-centered. Our presence in each student's writing process is immediately felt. We are there, privy to every act from the generation

of initial ideas to the completion of a final draft. There is maximum opportunity for us to take over the writing process, and there is also maximum temptation; beginning writers are not well able to defend themselves against invasion and are most grateful for any help they can get.

Therefore, we strive to help instructors resist temptation, to become neither teacher nor writer but rather a very particular sort of reader: the informing reader and poser of questions who stimulates writing. We know from reader-response criticism that reading produces a second, imaginary text, partially of the writer's and partially of the reader's concocting. Strong writers are strong readers of their own texts. Throughout writing, they anticipate other readers' questions and other readers' attempts to provide answers. Strong writers take control by providing answers of their own. Those answers are the written text.

Basic writing students are not strong writers in this sense. When basic writing students are unable to generate any more material, they generally have run out of questions to answer. The teacher's job is not to provide the students with answers or directives. The teacher's job is to return authorship—and responsibility—to the students by providing a reader's voice, by asking the questions needed to get the writing started again. Eventually these questions become part of the students' own repertoires. Incorporating the role of informing reader, basic writers become stronger writers.

While it is at the brainstorming and ordering stages that we most want students to get the feel of revision, it is here that we are most apt to leap ahead of students. Faced with nothing but suggestive words and phrases, we are apt to lapse into traditional roles of teacher and writer. We view notes, so easy to take over, as details that will be shaped into finished themes—themes finished as we imagine and expect they will be. In our eagerness, we ask for more details, assuming that the same appropriate details we envisage will soon fill the students' pages. We are inevitably disappointed.

Indeed, the request for "more details" is probably the most frequent advice given by new instructors in our program in response to student drafts. These instructors are, in effect, demanding an answer without posing the question. Teachers who insist that a student "develop this" or "give additional detail here" fare little better. For whether instructors leave students to search for answers without knowing the questions, or attempt to force the instructor's answers on the students, the result is usually one of those maddeningly familiar drafts that does not "hang together," that seems more a catalogue or collage of minutiae, without a cohering theme or center. These instructors have fallen into the trap of addressing directly the content of the students' prewriting, rather than affording the students the means or opportunity to explore on their own what the final content will be.

We hold, therefore, to the fundamental lesson of strategic intervention: it is almost always dangerous to address content at the initial stages of writing, for inevitably we lead students off their own developing, though as yet undisclosed, course. Moreover, when we attend too early

in the process to the particulars of the content of a student's writing, we fail to open the student's awareness to the context in which writing takes place. Knowledge of particulars—of the particular content pieces of a particular essay—is nontransferable, but an understanding of context can be applied in every instance. As a result, we approach content through questions, and most especially through questions of contextual relationships: writer/subject, reader/subject, or writer/reader.

While specific questions differ according to specific assignments, almost all papers require a set of questions that speak first to the issues of organization and focus—always within a contextual framework. In each instance, the teachers' suggestions are framed in the sort of questions students can ask themselves in later assignments. For instance, the guiding questions of a descriptive essay might be, "Why are you describing this particular person [or place]?" "What is the impression you want to give someone else?" Or, "What is most important or special about your subject to you? What more might your reader want or need to know about these special characteristics in order to feel the way you do?" There is no need to wait for answers. Answers can be allowed to develop in further prewriting: "You don't need to answer now. Go back and, with your answers in mind, jot down more thoughts." And as the bare materials of the first idea sheets begin to flesh out and develop, the students are prompted to experience, finally, a natural, almost organic evolution from brainstorming to draft.

The following interview from one of our classes illustrates the use of questions to help basic writers:

> Student (reading from her initial idea sheet on the topic "Describe a Person"): My Brother. Kind, caring, special friend, generous, talk, considerate, there when I need him, fight once in a while, friend, relative.
>
> Instructor: Good start. Now, of all these important ideas, what do you most want someone to know about your brother? What are the most important ideas to you? Think about this, and then brainstorm some more.
>
> Student: I don't think I can . . .
>
> Instructor: Wait. You don't have to come up with these ideas right here. Sit back and think and brainstorm for a while.
>
> (elapsed time :45)

Sent off to find her own solution to her own problem, the student returned approximately fifteen minutes later with this expanded idea sheet (all errors reproduced):

My Brother

generous—during graduation he bought me a nice gift, saved up for it, wanted to give me something special, for college.

friend I can talk to—talk about feelings & concerns about Mom's boyfriend he is nice, but around to much, tells stupid jokes, to old for her, but she likes him, he treats her well, we talk about how we feel & we should try to like him.

considerate—If Steve watches TV all day on Sunday, he will let me watch whatever I want that evening without fights or hastles.

Having been prompted with questions directed to the writer/subject relationship, the student began to locate the core of her relationship with her brother (at least for this writing) and to develop some useful "details," some examples of what would become the core of her essay. The instructor then turned to the reader/subject relationship:

Instructor (skimming the idea sheet): Steve sounds like the perfect brother—generous, sensitive, considerate. Is this the Steve people see when they first meet him?

Student: I don't know what you're asking.

Instructor: Well, you're describing Steve as generous, sensitive and considerate. If you never mentioned Steve's name in your paper, would everyone who's ever met or seen Steve read your essay and know who you're talking about? Or do some people have a different impression of him?

Student: What difference does it make?

Instructor (more openly directive): It would make a difference to those people who just see Steve watching the TV all day, and don't see him letting you choose the program at night. Think about how you usually go about convincing friends that you're right about a person and they're mistaken. You may have to do some convincing here that their first impression of Steve is wrong, or that there's another side to him.

Student: In my essay?

Instructor: First in your notes. Brainstorm some more, keeping our talk in the back of your mind.

(elapsed time 1:15)

By the close of the class period, the student had produced the following notes, which reflect the start of reader consciousness and a resulting "voice":

My Brother Steve

first impression—you may think he's self-centered. Good looking & smart. Plays hockey, goalie, macho. sometimes we fight, I get jealous and other people get jealous. he's not all perfect.

considerate—Doesn't hog T.V. when I want to watch he lets me. Other brothers and sisters fight. Steve is not self-centered. Cares about my feelings.

Friend—we are friends as well as relatives. can talk about good/bad problems/accomplishments. recently talked about how we felt about Mom's boyfriend.

    Upset
      he was to old
      around to much
realized—
      she likes him
      he is nice
      we should give him a chance
He helped me.

generous—for graduation he was proud of me and wanted to get a gift I could take to college. clock radio-Sony Digital
I use it, think of him

This student spent a class period on brainstorming, but in those fifty minutes created a base from which to move into ordering and drafting. In fact, her ordering step was nearly already complete, because she developed her material while maintaining a clear focus (Steve's considerateness and generosity), purpose (convincing others of his good character), and audience (those who might think him vain). In short, student and teacher avoided the problem of finding focus and purpose for an unfocused draft, a difficult task for an experienced writer, an often impossible one for beginners.

With particularly taciturn students an instructor's initial questions are crucial. This time the assignment was to describe a place:

Student: Look at this. I'm ready to start writing.

Instructor: You're already writing. Let's hear what you've written so far.

Student: Columbus Day weekend, First Baptist Church, Memorial Day weekend, Jim Morrison (The Doors) (didn't like them at first.)

Instructor: What are you writing about?

Student: Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

Instructor: Is that what you want to do, describe what it's like at Old Orchard?

Student: Yeah. On Memorial Day and Columbus Day.

Instructor: That's a good way to narrow down the time, but it's still a big job you've cut out for yourself. Old Orchard is a big place—the town, the amusement park, the boardwalk, the beach, the jetties. Why don't you go back to your seat, close your eyes,

and imagine that you're standing or sitting or lying in one spot—
your favorite spot—and jot down notes of what you see and hear
in your mind.

(elapsed time 1:35)

This particular intervention—sending the student to "see" his subject from
one vantage point—is more directive than questioning. Still, it serves to
heighten the student's sense of context and to sharpen the focus. The stu-
dent's introduction of Jim Morrison into his prewriting, along with his
seeming impatience with the prewriting process, suggests a tendency to
wander from the topic, or to rush from one topic to the next. This is
a tendency the student would likely find frustrating to curb at the drafting
stage; it is easier to handle during brainstorming.

About ten minutes later, the student returned with this "expanded"
idea sheet:

Old Orchard Beach

Columbus Day weekend
Memorial Day weekend
sit & watch tide go out
Summertime: touristy, trashy, beautiful, hot
Fall: autumn, scarcely populated, clean, beautiful sunrise, cold,
windy, gray skies.
lighthouse
black rocks

This is the conversation that took place:

Student: Okay. Done.

Instructor: It looks as though you've put yourself on the beach.
Is that right?

Student: On the rocks.

Instructor: All right. What are you going to do now?

Student: Write the paper.

Instructor: From the notes you have?

Student: I'll add some stuff.

Instructor: Such as?

Student: Like about the amusement park . . . and the rides . . .
and the trashy food places . . . .

Instructor: And if that's not enough, you can work your way along
the coast, right down to Bar Harbor. Let's see if you can develop
the information you've got. Pretend I'm your cousin from Ohio.
I know what a beach is, but I've never been to one. We're talking

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on the phone and you're describing Old Orchard so I can really see what you think is so great about the place. First let's take one of the entries on your sheet—"sit and watch the tide go out." Close your eyes and tell me what you see when you watch the tide. Go ahead. I'll write it down.

Student (somewhat hesitantly): You can see little lines of foam on the sand. Little waves in the sand, where the water was. Around the rocks and pebbles, the water makes the waves . . . like behind boats. It looks at first like the rocks are moving.

Instructor: Good. Anything more? Maybe farther off shore, over the ocean itself?

Student: Seagulls and killdeer diving for food. They come out of the sky like divebombers, not missing a stroke. Fight and argue over dead crabs.

Instructor (showing the student the notes): Okay. This is what you've written on just that one entry, and I think even your cousin could start to see the beach in it. Take your other entries and make notes for yourself. See what you can come up with.

(elapsed time 3:15)

In speaking, this particular student demonstrated facility with words, and once he had overcome his general impatience with the prewriting, he developed material quickly around a discernible center. Within the class hour he returned with a load of useful images:

Old Orchard Beach, ME

Summertime: touristy, trashy, beautiful, hot

Sit & watch tide go out. You can see little lines of foam on the sand. Little waves in the sand, where the water was. Around the rocks and pebbles, the water makes wakes. Like behind tiny boats. It looks at first like the rocks are moving.

Black rocks: My favorite place to sit. Shinny in foamy waves. Every wave comes in to freshen them with a new shiny coat of water. Shiny, sweaty like basketball players sitting on the bench at the half.

Right below where I sit on my favorite rock seagulls scream and argue and fight over a dead crab all pulled apart.

Farther out off shore, out over ocean. Seagulls and killdeer dive for food. They come out of sky like divebombers & enter water without missing a stroke.

You can see everything in the moonlight. On midnight walks rocks look wet and slick in the moonlight also. Especially nice when moon is full because shadows show designs.

About 2 miles out in harbor you can see the lighthouse with the light circling around like radar on a screen.

Fall: autumn Scarcely populated, clean, barren, beautiful sunrises, gray skies, cold windy.

gray skies overcast. thin cold with mist coming off rocks, as waves come in. Just a dusting of mist, lighter than a drizzle, but heavy enough to notice it. Would cut your bare skin like a straight razor.

On the black rocks waves are much higher and they crash harder. Tide going out leaves yellow foam, like old man's beard on sand and around rocks.

Now beach is an old man. You know that the old man is ready for winter. Next year I'll go back on Memorial Day weekend and see the young man being born again.

The student's final essay was not perfect: some critical foreground images were less fully developed than were some insignificant background scenes; transitions were at times abrupt or halting; the leitmotif of the old man/young man was a bit heavy-handed. Nevertheless, because the instructor had prompted the student to question the writer/subject relationship ("what you think is so great about the place") and the reader/subject relationship ("you're describing Old Orchard so [your distant cousin] can really see"), the student began to develop material around a solid core of thought, to consider reader needs, and to compose with some overall sense of purpose.

That student now had a sense of when to use a semicolon.

Even when students follow the prescribed writing process and instructors leave authorship to their students, cracks in the structure do occasionally appear: dialogues strike a dead end, apparently lively ideas suddenly die. But just as most veteran writing teachers have developed a repertoire of written responses to finished essays, teachers working in the laboratory method develop a repertoire of strategic contextual questions upon which they can draw as the writing situation demands: "What might be the most important quality of this person/place for your reader?" "What about this person/place seems contradictory? Are there moments when he/she/it changes?" "If your reader were to see a photograph of your subject, what would it show? What wouldn't it show?" "Where in your explanation of this process might a reader get confused?" "Why would a reader do this your way and not another?" "How might a reader argue against your position on this issue?" "How will you answer your reader's arguments?" "Can you anticipate and answer those arguments now?" The most effective interventions are directed at only one issue— or at most two issues—at a time, so instructors can develop their questions along a continuum to suit the natural continuum of the writing process, from the generation of material to the polishing of sentence structure and diction. Initial questions can be aimed at helping students uncover the pertinent information available to them and the central focus

of their ideas: "What is the issue?" "Why are you writing about this topic?" "What is the impression you want to give your reader about your subject?" "Exactly what makes you feel or think the way you do about your subject?" Once thoughts have been collected and a center has begun to form, questioning can turn to concerns about organization: "What are you preparing your reader to expect?" "Do these points prepare your reader for the final point you want to make?" "What information leads your reader to the conclusion you intend? What might lead your reader to another conclusion?" Only after basic issues of focus and organization have been resolved do we encourage teachers to address questions of sentence completeness, diction, and finally punctuation. These questions provide the step from editing to proofreading, and these are the questions of correction that we want beginning writers to realize come *only* at the close of revision, the questions that often answer themselves when the topic has been reviewed and seen clearly by the writer and when the essay has been rewritten and presented clearly to the reader.

Interventions such as we describe in the classroom must be brief, so that students can get on with their writing and teachers can get on to the next writer. The overriding principle is that the purpose of instruction is not to involve ourselves in students' writing, but rather to remove ourselves from it. Or perhaps more correctly, we hope to insinuate somewhere in our students' consciousness our own questioning voice, asking them over and over the questions critical to every writing task, questions they will answer in their own writing but will eventually ask themselves.

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Robert F. Moss

USING TV NEWS
IN BASIC WRITING CLASSES

"Pursue your studies," said the tall, handsome Black man at the podium, his voice a sonorous instrument echoing through the auditorium. "Prepare yourselves to be teachers, lawyers, architects. But always be open to new avenues and possibilities too. You might wind up in the fields you've chosen or, like me, you might wind up on *Eyewitness News.*"

The speaker was John Johnson, a veteran ABC newsman and member of New York's WABC-TV news team. The place was Hunter College in New York City and the sponsor was SEEK, a citywide program whose enrollment is principally made up of students from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds. The occasion was SEEK's annual Honors Day ceremony, a celebration of student achievement in academics and school service, and Johnson was the featured guest. He was about as attractive a role model as one could imagine, and his remarks brought laughter and applause from the audience, many of whom no doubt relished the image of themselves as members of a glamorous industry, their faces smiling out of the nation's TV sets, their viewers in the millions and their salaries not far behind. Johnson captivated his listeners from the moment he began his address not only because of his striking physical appearance and well-honed speaking skills but because of the industry he represents. In a more impromptu address a few years before, Chee Chee Williams, a Black newswoman who is a colleague of Johnson's at ABC, had excited our students in much the same way.

Student elation at the sight of a television reporter was not hard to comprehend. The average graduating high school senior has watched an estimated 15-18,000 hours of TV, while having spent only 11,000 hours in the classroom. Nor do students seem to grow any less enthralled by

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the magic box and the electronic kingdom within when they enter college. For them, as for most Americans, it seems to be a realm whose inhabitants all belong to a royal family, inspiring awe and worship, giving off a godlike aura. As in Edwin Arlington Robinson's, *Richard Corey*, they "glitter when they walk." Harold M. Foster, Michael Novak, Robert Rutherford Smith, and others have studied the deification process television effortlessly engenders. Foster calls the medium a "prime conveyor of modern mythology" (26). Novak writes of the urgent need to "understand all the ways in which the medium has altered us, particularly our inner selves: the perceiving, mythic, symbolic, and the judging, critical parts of ourselves" (9). Smith remarks that "television is one of the media used for the transmission and reinforcement of the myths of our time" (82). Those who find these characterizations hyperbolical would drop their objections if they could see the reception Johnson and Williams received at Hunter, though they only rank as lesser nobility in the TV pantheon.

The academic who, by definition, is usually a person who has devoted himself to the life of the mind, is apt to regard the cultural primacy of commercial television as a source of despair and horror. He thinks of TV as a disease which insures mental atrophy in the young or as Pied Piperism at its worst. Michael Lieberman notes with alarm the fact that the vocabulary of most television programs is probably less than 5,000 words: "Clearly viewers actually encounter significantly less language in these programs than in live conversation and markedly less than in reading" (604). College teachers have every right to feel that the "tube" is the natural enemy of the book, and it is difficult to condemn too strongly the mediocrity of what network television serves up each night. Nor is it hard to make a case against the nightly news. Even as I watched the immense enthusiasm Johnson evoked, it occurred to me how easy it would be to disparage him or any other figure of broadcast journalism. Aren't they merely well-manicured elocutionists, reciting the news off teleprompters? Even in the TV news world, aren't they derisively referred to as "player pianos," men and women who recite what others have written? Any intellectual will be tempted to disdain TV news as flashy, show business oriented, and superficial and exhort the class to turn off the seven o'clock news and pick up *The New York Times, Newsweek* or *Time.* The result, however, would be a missed opportunity—certainly for the students a program like SEEK attracts, students who enter college with certain unmistakable educational handicaps. Why not find a way to exploit TV's powerful spell for academic advantage? If students are so clearly enamored of Johnson and his ilk, though perhaps for superficial reasons of glamor and income, doesn't it make sense to try to convert that infatuation to productive ends? Of all the TV celebrities whom academics might use as the focus of their lessons, surely newspeople are the best choice since they *are* journalists; however meretricious some of their techniques may be, their basic job remains the transmission of current events. Although the language they employ must be simple enough to reach a broad audience, it adheres to the same standard English usage

teachers are attempting to impart to their students. Moreover, its syntax and vocabulary are closer to college-level discourse than anything remedial English students are likely to be exposed to. Hence, it provides the proper models.

With all this in mind, I devised a unit of study for my develop mental English class in which I used broadcast journalism as the pedagogical framework, my objectives being to strengthen the students' capacity for critical thinking and to improve their writing facility. As a first stage, the students were required to familiarize themselves with all three network news teams, then select one and watch it regularly for a couple of weeks. My initial thrust was usually content-oriented rather than focusing on grammar or the nature of the TV news medium itself. I simply wanted the class to approach TV news in a more analytical fashion. Subsequently, however, I turned to the more elementary dimensions of accurate grammar and proper usage which are inseparable from basic writing courses, requiring that my class revise their themes in accordance with my criticisms and corrections.

The most immediate benefit of this experience was that I was compelling the class to become much more conversant with national and international affairs, two areas where their knowledge is generally distressingly and frustratingly spotty. Among young people who previously could not name even one of New York State's two U.S. Senators, give the approximate location of either Jordan or Nicaragua, or define the President's "Star Wars" weapons systems, a hazy grasp of world events began to emerge. Classroom discussions and subsequent written assignments focused on different aspects of TV journalism. The first topic I introduced reached back to John Johnson's address. What are the qualities, talents, and traits that go into making a successful TV newscaster? Some of the responses were incomplete and shallow, but others were gratifyingly thoughtful and comprehensive.

In the end, we were able to arrive at a consensus on the most essential attributes of a network newsperson: looks, grooming, clear speech, a pleasing personality. Excess of any kind must be shunned. "The women wear makeup, of course," wrote one student. "But never to the extent that it looks gaudy." Summarizing the forensic necessities of the job, someone else remarked on the need for the "right rhythm of speech, good eye contact, and a self-confident look." The more perceptive students were able to effectively probe a question about the suitability of aggressive, combative personalities like Mike Wallace and Sam Donaldson for jobs on the evening news. In most cases, they noted (and subscribed to) the pervasive preference for placid, unassertive temperaments on the regular news team. They could easily comprehend the failure of a "controversial" figure such as Tom Snyder on *Eyewitness News*, despite his national reputation. As host of the now-defunct *Tomorrow*, a late-night talk show of the 1970s, Snyder gained renown—and notoriety—for his brash, opinionated commentaries, Jack Paar-like emotionalism, and frequently contentious attitude toward his guests. Elevated to an anchorman's job on the nightly news, he was too outspoken and abrasive for

the prime time audiences, and my students agreed with the general con-
demnation. Snyder struck them as too brazenly self-centered. "He hogs
the camera," wrote one. "Even when he's not there, you get the feeling
he thinks it's the *Tom Snyder Show* or something." My suggestion that
Snyder added flavor and dynamism to a bland ambiance met with no
agreement. To the sophisticated observer, these are commonplace obser-
vations, of course, but for students from academically limited back-
grounds, the process of exploring otherwise undefined emotional responses
to TV journalism can provide valuable mental training.

Another productive area of investigation is the common format behind
the major news shows. This topic creates an opportunity to introduce
the class to the comparison/contrast mode. The relative interchangeability
of the major news teams has often drawn fire from media critics, and
it is useful to elicit a commentary from the students on this facet of broad-
cast journalism. No one has much difficulty discerning the basic com-
position of the team—two anchor people (usually a white male in his
forties or fifties and a female, who may be either white or Asian, or two
white males), a few correspondents, a sports commentator and a
weatherman—but many students will not have given much thought to
the comparative importance of the different jobs and will not be aware
of the fact that salaries are apparently inversely proportional to the
amount of work the job requires: the "general assignment" reporters often
write their own segments where the regulars generally do not. Since there
are few correspondents who would not trade their current assignments
for positions as anchors, it is worth asking why these newspeople are
unable to make the transition. What elements of a reporter's personality
or appearance make him or her acceptable only in small doses? One New
York City local correspondent, Myra Wolinski, struck a few students as
perhaps too lively for her own good. "She's perky and has lots of energy,
which is nice," went a typical comment. "But I would find it tiring to
watch her for a whole half-hour."

Whatever the topics, comparison is going to emerge more readily than
contrast; the similarity of TV news teams makes this unavoidable. Con-
trasts are best encouraged through the structure and focus of questions.
Potential queries: What are the chief similarities and dissimilarities you
see in the ethnic and sexual makeup of the news teams? Are there any
differences in the overall presentation of the news, either in style or con-
tent, among the three shows? Does the tone vary? The visual techniques?
The relationships among the newspeople? Instructors who want to shake
the dust of academe from their topics can easily convert them to a glossier,
more entertaining form. For example: Imagine you have just been made
head of a new network—at a million dollars a year, with a limousine
and a plush executive suite, of course—but in order to keep the job you
have to insure high ratings for the news department, a feat which you
can only accomplish by pirating the best newscasters from the other three
networks. In assembling a full complement of the best journalistic talent,
whom would you hire and why?

One unimaginative but very reliable assignment is to require a discus-

sion of the differences among three anchor people, or three sports reporters, or three correspondents. Often the assessments will be limited to the superficialities of appearance and dress, but occasionally a more interesting analysis will emerge. "Brokaw is boyish," read one appraisal by a female student. "Like your older brother or your favorite uncle. Rather is tough and very formal, not like your relative but more like your boss at work. Geraldo Rivera is the sexiest one. He's the guy you'd like to go out with." In my classes, few names come up as often as Barbara Walters, and most students find her more emotional than rivals, such as John Chancellor or Roger Mudd, and less commanding. (In this connection, it was revealing that contrasts were always intragender—men with men and women with women.) They agreed with the following comment by David Halberstam: "She specializes in the celebrity interview, the journalist as bigger star than interviewee. Her roots are in entertainment" (20). Categories of news can also be a context in which to set up contrasts. Naturally students from inner city environments are particularly sensitive to the coverage of minority affairs, though other areas can be equally fruitful.

Attention to minority issues in the news may be the best framework in which to concentrate on the ethnic and sexual makeup of the various news shows. That each show seeks a balance is self-evident, but if the students are Black and Hispanic they will be quick to point out that members of their own subculture are mostly relegated to second echelon jobs. "The Black newsmen only do special reports, which means you only see them once in a while," said a Black student bitingly. "Maybe that's how often the public wants to see them." For Blacks, the shade of pigmentation has so long been a factor in how they are treated by society and how they regard themselves that they are not surprised by the unstated favoritism based on color. Until recently, the only Black, male or female, in the New York area who had captured and held onto an anchor position was Sue Simmons, who is so light-complected that some students were not aware that she was Black.

In other cities, the absence of Black (or Hispanic) faces at the helm is just as conspicuous; the regular anchors are white males or females, though Asian women can be said to have broken the color line in several cities. Consider the following randomly assembled list of anchors; Chuck Moore and John Pruitt, both white males (NBC. Atlanta); Jerry Dunphy and Christine Lund, both white (ABC, Los Angeles); John Schubeck and Tritia Toyota, a white male and a Japanese-American female (CBS, Los Angeles); Randy Little, a white male (ABC, Cincinnati); Lois Matheson and Kathi Goertzen, both white females (ABC, Seattle); Ernie Anastos and Kaity Tong, a white male and a Chinese-American woman (ABC, New York). Harry Porterfield (ABC, Chicago) and Phyllis Criswell (ABC, Dallas), both Black, are among the few exceptions. Throughout the country, the TV news jobs that typically go to Blacks or Hispanics are weather, sports, or special reports; e.g., Joe Washington, a Black sportscaster (CBS, Atlanta); Jeannette Harrison, a Black correspondent specializing in educational subjects (NBC, Minneapolis); Jim

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Avila, a Hispanic reporter (CBS, Chicago); and Steve Pool, a Black weatherman (ABC, Seattle).

Like them or not, these are the racial/political realities of the day, and they might as well be faced in this context as any other. My Black students remarked approvingly on the elevation of John Johnson to a semiregular anchor spot on ABC's New York City news team, but no one knew the circumstances behind the promotion. Here I had a chance to supply illuminating background information. In a surprisingly under-publicized episode in 1980, Johnson sued to be released from his ABC contract, claiming discrimination. He said that Ted Turner had offered to make him head of the CNN news team, a precedent-setting opportunity, since it would have made him the first Black anchor on a national news show. He also complained that his salary, $125,000, was appallingly low for his years of experience. (Students are endlessly fascinated by the gargantuan incomes of celebrities and gasp at the thought that $125,000 could be considered meager—until they hear about the $1 million-plus range which Rather, Walters, and even the "retired" Walter Cronkite command.) Johnson dropped his suit when ABC agreed to give him a raise and a promotion.

Students of Hispanic descent are heavily represented in the SEEK program, and they usually remark on the relative paucity of Spanish-surnamed newspeople. The problem is perhaps best approached as part of the generally meager coverage of Latino life in New York City by the media. Often one can pick up five or six issues of local newspapers at random without finding a single article about, for example, the struggles of Puerto Rican politicians for an enlarged power base in the Bronx, or the penetration of the Puerto Rican community by the Pentecostal movement, or the conflicts among the increasingly diverse subdivisions within the city's Spanish-speaking populace. The first discovery for the instructor is how passive the students are about their "invisible" status. They seem to accept it as a natural condition of life. Still, with a little consciousness-raising from the front of the classroom (and the leadership of the more assertive Hispanics), they will write energetically about the probable explanations for these phenomena. Not everyone can emerge as an incisive social observer, of course, but many will offer credible reasons for the fact that, judging by the coverage in the New York media, their subculture does not often make news, nor are its representatives deemed qualified to report the news. Prejudice is the most often cited cause, but the language barrier is mentioned too, along with ignorance about gaining access to the media. The more sophisticated Hispanics are aware of the role that political activism plays in such matters, and compare themselves—with a mixture of envy and resentment—to the Blacks, whose collective vociferousness, political savvy, and lobbying skills have won them a far bigger share of popular attention than the Hispanic community with whom they are often lumped together. "We have no Spanish NAACP."

Since they have grown up in a city which is a vast mosaic of different ethnic groups, the students have come to expect a significant measure

of minority representation on local news shows. They are surprised to learn how carefully and minutely controlled the ethnic and sexual distribution on these shows has become. As Chee Chee Williams described the situation, the quotas that have been created are so rigidly applied that if there is no opening for a new Black or Hispanic male, none will be considered for a job. She herself was hired, she said, because Melba Tolliver—one of the first Blacks in TV news—resigned, and her spot had to be filled by a replacement of the same sex and race. Such informative revelations make the subject matter all the more engrossing.

In surveying the cultural makeup of the news team, it can be stimulating to see that the class confronts the thornier aspects of the issue of fair representation. A provocative topic might require the students to agree or disagree on the following: "Since TV networks are publicly held, profit-minded companies, not public agencies, they should not have to worry about anything but making money and securing the highest possible ratings. If the public demonstrates a preference for white Anglo-Saxon males, then it is entirely defensible that they should be given most of the news jobs." Forcing the students to confront the conflict between a network's public responsibilities and its obligations to its shareholders can heighten student awareness of an important area of debate.

One of the perennial controversies about TV news is its degree of political bias, if any. As a topic in basic writing, however, it proved disappointing. The students simply had not studied enough news stories in sufficient depth to buttress their arguments. In this respect, they did not fall short of the country at large, which never fares too well on ABC's irregularly scheduled *Viewpoint*, a face-off between a random assemblage of citizens and four or five members of the press. Presided over by the indefatigably courteous Ted Koppel, these forums seldom produce anything but torrents of criticism, each onslaught initiated by a political constituency which wants to see its opponents suppressed or derided in the media and its own views loudly promulgated. Advocacy, not objectivity, is everyone's true but unstated goal.

Broadcast journalism, of course, is not a pureblooded species of reportage. It is a hybrid, part information service and part entertainment medium. The degree to which show business values and techniques influence TV journalism is crucial to any understanding of the subject. "Most viewers don't realize the closeness in format of television news and television entertainment programs," observes Foster. In the words of Paul Attanasio, "the rallying cry of the critics of broadcast journalism was that the news business had become show business" (21). In this area, my students didn't need much elaboration from me. With a push in the right direction, the majority have no difficulty isolating elements of the nightly news which reflect a "show biz" orientation. From the attractive dress and appearance of the newspeople and their personable manners to the frequent choice of unnewsworthy but amusing, sordid, or poignant stories, to the technical slickness of the shows, the students detected showmanlike glitz everywhere. A few mentioned the Von Bulow murder trial as a prime example and were in accord with Foster's description

of the case as "lurid and worthless" (29).

Another facet of the news which prompted many comments was the bantering exchanges among the newscasters—by now a trademark of these shows. Although some students accepted the pretense of "impromptu" badinage, a lot found this element corny and synthetic. One essay was critical of the uneasy coexistence of grim subject matter and lighthearted commentary: "They are always going from somebody's tragedy—maybe a baby got killed or something—to joking around. A lot of times the kidding seems forced."

As every basic writing instructor discovers, students have a limited ability to explore any subject in depth, to delve deeply and mine out varied dimensions and ramifications of a topic. Among the words I hear myself use most often are "elaborate" and "enlarge upon," and few comments flow out of my pen more often than "needs more explanation." Hence, I felt it was essential that the class select an individual story and follow it for a week or two. In this way, they could present a fully detailed account, an anatomy of a major public event as filtered through the network news. In addition to comprehension, they could supply a shrewder, more discerning perspective on TV journalism and how it handles major stories. I urged everyone to pick a controversial story because it was likely to test the resources of a news staff more strenuously, and, fortunately, life cooperated by supplying an incident which was all I could have hoped for in terms of explosiveness and universal emotional appeal—the case of Bernhard Goetz, the New York straphanger who, in December, 1984, vaulted to international fame by shooting four Black teenagers he thought were trying to rob him. An overwhelming percentage of my students chose this story, and the result were enormously gratifying. I doubt that any homework assignment I have ever given has generated such impassioned commitment. It pumped new life into the old cliché "passions ran high." As a result, it became the one story about which the class was able to make informed judgments on the quality of TV reporting and offer allegations about bias which they could back up.

As the case unfolded, the class scrutinized each new wrinkle and revelation with the intensity of research scientists observing the behavior of a unique new organism. One of the major deficiencies in their written work, absence of supporting detail, vanished dramatically. In its place was a seemingly limitless storehouse in which every particular of the case could fit comfortably. An astonishing precision of reference appeared in their work, enough to bring joy to the heart of any instructor whose immemorial injunction to "Be specific and use examples" had generally been issued in vain. As a result, it was possible to learn that the four youths who approached Goetz were wearing jump suits, were allegedly carrying sharpened screwdrivers, asked for a match and then five dollars, etc. Later disclosures which modified the earliest accounts were eagerly absorbed and integrated into the assignments: two of the boys were shot in the back, one was shot a second and third time because he "didn't look so bad," and only two of the youths actually approached Goetz. (I tried the antique Chaplin gag on defeating a gang single-handedly—

"I surrounded 'em"—and it worked. Eventually everything old becomes new again.)

A number of students were severely critical of TV news coverage, arguing that television—and the media in general—had jumped to too many conclusions about Goetz and glorified him too quickly, or at least created a convenient scenario by which the public could accomplish this glorification. "They made him out to be a hero when they hardly had any facts yet," a student claimed. "They should have waited before they made everyone think Goetz was like Charles Bronson or somebody like that. They called him the 'Death Wish' killer, which immediately made him sound like he was in the right. Look how wrong they all turned out to be when the facts came out more completely." From the beginning, reporters had not investigated the evidence sufficiently or made an effort to sort out fact from half-truths and probable fictions. Several students drew the surprisingly shrewd conclusion that the media was a business, like any other, and was telling the public what it wanted to hear about this sensational and unprecedented case in order to attract viewers: "This was a big story, and they played it up so the public would watch their show," someone wrote. Since I have always found ghetto- and barrio-bred students to be somewhat naive and gullible when it comes to the media (they are often devout believers in *The National Enquirer*, for example), it was rewarding to witness the growth of a salutary skepticism.

The only negative feature of this component of my news project was the racial polarity that developed. It reflected the widening fault line which split the larger society, as more information about the Goetz case became available. After the initial symmetry of response between the races, my Black students soon parted company with the Hispanics and the few nonHispanic whites in class. Rightly or wrongly, Black swiftly gravitated toward an anti-Goetz position, while the others remained fairly steadfast in their support. Still, there was no friction of any kind—only a spirited debate.

Perhaps the most inevitable of topics in studying broadcast journalism is a juxtaposition of TV coverage with that of newspapers and magazines. Needless to say, limiting the class to one major story will produce the best focused results. An English teacher is almost certain to harbor a preference for written journalism, and hence it is distressing (if predictable) that the majority of students in developmental writing classes rank television news above the print medium. There is no comparison between a verbal account of a news event and a visual rendering, they say. For them, children of the TV generation, the word bringeth not life—only the picture. The impact of live footage is hypnotic to them and cannot be duplicated on the page, even if that page is in *Time* or *Life* and is bedecked with action photos in color. Here are some of the comments: "The TV news helps you look at a story more, and it puts you into the news; it also shows you a little humor and doesn't make it as boring as when you're reading it." "On the TV news they make it very interesting; they don't leave out points. But in the newspapers they seem to be pro-

viding too much information." "Comparing network news to magazines and newspapers, I found TV news to be more lively, factual and complete. In contrast to television news, newspapers and magazines were more questionable as to facts and had a tendency to prolong their points making them dull, while causing me to lose interest." "Every time Warner Wolfe on Channel 2 [the CBS New York City station] reports the sports events, he always has a very amusing comment to make about something. When you read the sports in the paper you always get the facts that occurred without any humor." Fortunately, there were a few dissenting opinions, almost always from the brighter members of the class: "The newspapers tell more of the little details of a story than TV does. These details may seem trivial to some people but quite important to others. For example, in the case of the screenwriters strike, the papers told what provoked the strike and they told some of the strikers' personal stories, whereas the TV news only told of the strike and what shows were shut down because of it." "Television does not produce the news better than magazines and newspapers; it only has more vivid pictures to offer because of the impact of actually seeing something. The newspapers offer far more facts and cover a much wider range of subjects than TV. A story about a foreign country will get more attention in the papers than on TV because television news prefers to tell you about local affairs."

The instructors' frustrations are enhanced when they discover, as I did, that, in addition to evaluating the worth of the respective news outlets incorrectly, the students regard TV newscasters as more objective than their colleagues on newspaper staffs! Here the municipal setting in which I work is unquestionably a factor. Given a choice between two sensationalistic tabloids, the *New York Post* and the *Daily News* and one formidable serious newspaper, *The New York Times*, most students in a remedial English class will opt for the *Post* or the *News*, where the big stories are usually bedizened and gussied up. To correct the class's superficial impressions in this regard, I distributed coverage of a major story from the *Post*, the *News* and the *Times* and either *Time* or *Newsweek*. Once they had the evidence in front of them, the students were able to make more discriminating judgments. The hyperbolical headlines of the two tabloids, alongside the more restrained, dignified version in the *Times*, were enough to put the matter into perspective, while most could make sensible contrasts between the emotionally charged writing of the *Post* and the *News* and the sobriety of the *Times*. "They want you to think it's one way," wrote one student, "and only that way. But in the *Times* it could be either way." For students who have never given much thought to such issues, and for whom terms like "objective" and "subjective" are at best only dimly understood, this is a meaningful intellectual advance. Still more encouraging was their ability to see the differences between the writing in local newspapers and that of news magazines, which have perfected an interpretive style aimed at entertaining the reader while informing him at the same time. Care is taken to provide balanced coverage, and conflicting points of view are always represented, but the reader feels the presence of an authorial (or editorial)

voice. One could hardly quarrel with the assertion that most TV reporting is more objective than *Time* or *Newsweek*.

An enterprising instructor might want to carry my experiment to its logical and most dramatic conclusion: having the class set up its own broadcast team and put its version of the news "on the air." The content could be made up of either the major international, national, and local stories of the week or campus events. Since there is no limit to the number of potential "special reports," everyone in class could have an assignment. Student involvement of this sort is always the best antidote to apathy and passivity. Some students would no doubt be shy about making presentations, while others would take readily to the exciting role of newsperson they have seen so often on the TV screen, clutching the microphone and announcing confidently to imaginary millions: "This is Sonia at the site of the accident. I'm speaking to two of the victims..." What better way to cap the experiment than videotaping it and critiquing the performances? Michael J. Witsch, who teaches video production at a New York high school, has elaborated upon this idea, describing various technical features which can be employed (35).

In the foregoing discussion, I have emphasized that sharpened critical faculties and an enlarged awareness of the dynamics of the news media are key educational accomplishments. Equally important to me is the inculcation of a sounder, more sophisticated mastery of writing skills. I mentioned earlier, instructors can achieve this in a strictly conventional way by simply building a traditional grammar component into the lesson plan, one in which the students must rewrite their work according to each instructor's specifications. I have also tested more creative strategies, such as having the students write their own account of a designated news story from sketchy notes on the board. All the bare bones of an event can be supplied without robbing students of the opportunity to flesh them out. Next I like to show a tape of a well-known newsperson giving his or her rendering of the same story. I then hand out transcriptions of the segment and perhaps a good newspaper account. (Instructors who don't have a VCR and access to a video hookup for their classroom through the college audio-visual department would have to bypass the in-class viewing.) Asked to revise what they have done, using the professional versions as paradigms, the students can derive considerable benefit. They are forced to see their own work on a subject in close juxtaposition to that of practicing newspeople. In such a context, it is fairly easy to present students with alternatives to their own diction and sentence patterns, and, because they are examining hot-off-the-wire (or tube) journalistic renderings of a timely, newsworthy occurrence, these models are more accessible than typical textbook examples, which can seem both remote and terribly intimidating.

One of my more successful applications of this approach concerned a gripping story from London on a race riot in the Tottenham section in early October, 1985. After assigning a paragraph-long synopsis of the event based on a skeletal outline I supplied, I gave them Peter Jennings' ABC *World News* summary of the ugly episode, along with an account

from *The New York Times.* On the basis of these materials, I asked the class to overhaul their own treatments and fulfill three new requirements; (1) increase the specificity and vividness of their work by drawing on the new fund of details at their disposal; (2) incorporate a list of words which were not likely to be part of their working vocabulary but which the professional stories used—including *erupt, succumb, berserk,* and *rationalization;* and (3) reshape some of their sentences to correspond to more sophisticated syntactical patterns taken from ABC and the *Times* (in particular, complex and compound/complex sentences, and sentences which included elements held in suspension or used in apposition). I encouraged the class to use their own words as much as possible, except where they were interpolating the vocabulary list with which they had been provided.

As in any basic writing class, the results sprawled across the spectrum from feeble to excellent. More than a few students, however, turned in work with approximately as much improvement as the following sample (in which some of the more elaborate sentence structures are underlined):

Original

> A riot happened in London last night between the police and black people there. The riot was because the police killed a black woman while they were investigating a crime of theft. The people got mad and threw things at the police and started fires and finally they even killed a policeman. For the first time in England, the people in the riot used guns. This was the fifth time in the last month that blacks in London have gone on a riot. One government leader looked at the situation and said no one had an excuse for this action. But a black leader said there was a lot of police brutality against them all the time. So what do you expect?

Revision

> Last night a riot erupted in London, England in the Tottenham section between the police and a large number of black people. *In Tottenham, which is predominantly white, there is a black housing project, which is where all the trouble started.* The blacks threw bricks, bottles and homemade bombs, and also they put cars on fire. They *wielded* weapons, like knives and guns and actually killed a policeman, who was the first one ever killed in a riot. About 240 policeman were hurt.
>
> *The people were enraged because the police raided a black woman's home, and while they were searching for stolen goods, she succumbed to a heart attack.* Then many black people, especially young males, went berserk. Afterwards, the English minister in charge of law and order said the riot was not justified at all because it was all done by criminals looking for a rationalization. But the black people there say the police are virtually

uncontrollable in their neighborhood. *Many black people, including a mother of six, have been seriously hurt by the police. Not all the violence is by blacks, however, and white people are being violent too, as in the case of a journalist who was stabbed by a white youth.*

Student commentaries like those in this article hardly bear the stamp of scholarly analysis, nor are they written in elegant prose. Nevertheless, they do serve educationally valid ends, increasing comprehension of the subjects at hand and enhancing writing facility. Behind any TV-oriented lesson, there should be a "hidden agenda" aimed at getting the students to read more than they do and to stay abreast of the news. The imagination of writing teachers is probably always going to be linear. Writing teachers will always have an attachment to the written word, to forms of communication in which knowledge is relayed through lines that reach from left to right. We must, however, make an effort to adapt to the orientation of today's students, for whom the linear is infinitely less alluring than a box with pictures. Through experiments such as I have described here, it is possible to help students grow more analytical about that box and use it as a bridge to improved writing skills.

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