STARS

Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019

2011

Crossing Literate Worlds Exploring How Students With Rich Identities As Writers Negotiate Multiple Writing Contexts

Autumn Phelps Shrum
University of Central Florida

STARS Citation

CROSSING LITERATE WORLDS:
EXPLORING HOW STUDENTS WITH RICH IDENTITIES AS WRITERS
NEGOTIATE MULTIPLE WRITING CONTEXTS

by

AUTUMN PHELPS SHRUM
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term
2011

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the literate identities of college students who engage in various school and non-school writing practices simultaneously. In case studies of three student writers, the researcher seeks to explore how the discourse community roles, self-perceptions, negotiation of multiple writing processes and development of authority impacted the students' identities as writers. Triangulated research methods included weekly interviews with the student participants, observation of the students in their writing classrooms and analysis of the students' school and non-school texts over one semester.

Students experienced several conflicts and synergies between contexts. Main findings indicated that writing across many academic and extra-academic settings during a short time period may alter self-perceptions, encourage or discourage the repurposing of writing processes, and limit the development of authority. Implications for teachers and researchers of college-level writing center on awareness of the literate lives of students beyond classroom walls. Future research questions are raised regarding the transfer of writing-related knowledge as it may occur in students with strong literate identities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Attending graduate school part-time while working as a full-time newspaper reporter in the spring of 2010 became a challenge. It not only affected my physical energy level, but also my identity as a writer. By day, I reported feature stories about fashion, entertainment and food. By night, I wrote 10-page papers in which my intention was to mimic scholarly articles. As many working college students have done, I constantly repositioned my roles and writing practices as I moved from the workplace to the classroom. To complicate matters, I also carved out time each week to tailor my resume and compose cover letters for various job applications; layoffs had been looming at my newspaper. Late in the semester, around finals week, I started a new job in the marketing department at a performing arts center, which brought about an entirely different set of writing-related changes and challenges.

Meanwhile, during my struggle of balancing work, coursework, and finding a new job, I became absorbed in a branch of composition theory that I realized so closely tied to my personal experience. The central idea that has served as the foundation for my research is the conception of literate identities as products of the many discourse communities writers belong to. I will define discourse communities more thoroughly in the literature review that follows. To offer a brief definition for now, I call the discourse community a culture or social group that shares common interests, works toward

common goals and produces common texts. College writing classrooms, I should forefront, are not classified as discourse communities in this report.

Most of us belong to multiple discourse communities at any given time. And when students enter a college writing classroom, they enter with previously acquired knowledge from past discourse communities as well as knowledge they are currently acquiring. In other words, many students have complex literate identities because they participate in many activities that require writing. College students today are deeply involved in their social circles, jobs and other extra-academic activities as they take on full course loads. They are busy people who must often balance multiple writing tasks simultaneously. The literature on student writers and their discourse communities, I found, focuses largely on how students move chronologically from discourse community to writing classroom, or from writing classroom to discourse community. Not much attention is paid toward how they negotiate multiple school and non-school contexts at the same time, however. After this realization, the initial questions that came to mind were very broad in scope. How, I wondered, can students distinguish between various kinds of writing when they write in multiple discourse communities during the same time frame? Should they try to isolate the writing they do in each context, or should they look more closely at what each has to offer the others? And what should their writing teachers advise them to do?

The scholarship that has made the greatest impression on my view of discourse community enculturation and writer identities—including, but not limited to the works of Kevin Roozen, Jean Ketter and Judy Hunter—serves as the foundation for the study I

designed to address the issue of multimembership. I set out to conduct case studies of college students who wrote for multiple school and non-school purposes, seeking answers to the question at the core of my research: How do students negotiate multiple writing practices at one time? I purposely sought after students with strong identities as writers who enjoyed writing and who produced substantial amounts of writing inside and outside of their college classrooms. The three students I followed over the course of the spring 2011 semester could not have been more interesting, intelligent writers. By coming to know each of them and their literate backgrounds, I was able to hone in on the key aspects of their participation in multiple discourse communities and make connections between these aspects that perhaps have not been made as explicitly in previous research.

Because my study participants were all so interested in writing, I felt compelled to address the issue of how their self-perceptions shaped the writing they did in multiple discourse communities and school contexts. In addition, because these student writers were so immersed in many genres of writing, it was necessary to examine the ways in which they changed their writing processes as they moved from genre to genre. And because all three students perceived themselves as good writers and appeared very confident in their ability to write multiple genres simultaneously, this begged the question of how knowledgeable they actually were about the writing they did in each of their school and non-school contexts. How well, in other words, were they able to develop authority in any genre of writing if they wrote so many genres at one time? Drawing on these three primary concepts that emerged most visibly from my research—student self-perceptions, the simultaneous negotiation of processes across genres and development of

authority—as well as my own experiences, this study builds an argument for the need to explore discourse community enculturation from a fresh perspective. It asks us to consider students' multiple school and non-school writing practices as the forces that simultaneously conflict, compete, and mold students' identities as writers at any given point in time.

In the chapters that follow, I will explore the theory and research that has shaped my study and provide a thorough discussion of the study itself. Chapter two offers a review of the literature that covers issues of discourse community enculturation and writer identities, self-perceptions of student writers, process theory, and authority development. All of these elements, I discovered, played a role in how my study participants negotiated multiple school and non-school writing practices. Chapter three describes the design of the study from its conception to analyses of the data collected. Chapter four, the first of three case chapters, is the story of Jack, a UCF student and native German who is immersed in various genres of online texts. Chapter five is the story of Nikki, a UCF junior who writes fan fiction stories and a fantasy novel in her free time and hopes to pursue career in publishing. Chapter six is the story of Jeanne, a non-traditional community college student who brings her love of creative writing and a history as an advertising professional to a first-year writing classroom. Lastly, chapter seven provides a discussion of what all three case studies considered together contribute to the existing literature, what implications these students' stories have for teachers and researchers of college writing, and what questions they raise for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is no secret that college students write for multiple purposes all the time. They write in composition and other English classes, their disciplinary classes and also in contexts outside of school. In their free time, students might compose poetry, maintain blogs or post their opinions on online forums. Yet often students do not perceive a meaningful connection between extra-disciplinary writing and the texts they produce in school. Few scholars have called attention to a strong relationship that exists between academic and nonacademic writing practices. Kevin Roozen's studies focus a great deal on the act of "repurposing" writing practices from non-school contexts for writing assignments in school settings. In "From Journals to Journalism: Tracing Trajectories of Literate Development," Roozen analyzes how a student repurposes private journal writing for article assignments in a journalism course. Similarly, in "Journalism Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy and Academic Literacy: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Activities," he examines a student's "splicing" of academic texts and non-academic genres (9). And In "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes," he discovers how one student's writing process of copying Bible verses influences her writing process for a class assignment at the university:

> Accounting for the trajectories of practice that inform Lindsey's disciplinary
> writing process demands that conceptual maps of how persons develop
> disciplinary writing expertise need to include the rich repertoires of memorial

practices from persons' reading, writing, making and doing from a broad array of semiotic performances as well as how such practices are repurposed into disciplinary engagements (347).

Jean Ketter and Judy Hunter have also examined the connection between students' school and non-school writing. In "Creating a Writer's Identity on the Boundaries of Two Communities of Practice," they claim that one student's identity as a writer benefits from her simultaneous participation in a public relations internship and a related course: "Her participation in the two communities of practice enhances her understanding of writing as a complex interaction between the writer's identity and the social cultural practice of the community" (326). Ketter and Hunter go on to suggest that teachers should "help students reconceptualize all writing activity as collective work" (327).

While a link clearly exists between writing practiced inside and outside of school, other research on the issue also indicates that students often feel a disconnect. As Richard Courage claims in "The Interaction of Public and Private Literacies," students may view school writing as "an alien activity," an entirely separate act from the notes, diary entries, letters and many other private genres practiced outside of school. School writing is often viewed as separate from workplace writing as well. Perhaps one of the most thorough studies of the relationship between academic and nonacademic writing is *Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts*. In this collection of several studies set in universities and workplaces, Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway and Anthony Paré view writing as a "situated activity" which, as it occurs within

different activity systems, has different motives and purposes: "Students often live on the borders between such activity systems, juggling course demands with social, recreational and workplace needs. Such complex systems define our roles and afford or deny us certain positions" (26).

Much of the literature on discourse community enculturation and writer identities demonstrates how students deal with writing practices in school and non-school contexts as they move from one to another sequentially. And few studies focus on how students balance conventions of these contexts simultaneously. I have already offered a brief definition of discourse communities and have explained their relationship to writing studies. In order to explore this relationship in further depth, first a more thorough overview of some widely-accepted definition of discourse communities is necessary.

<center>Discourse Communities Defined</center>

Discourse communities may be extracurricular, cultural, home-based and internet-based. They may be clubs, professional organizations or social circles, to name a few examples. James Porter, in "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," defines the discourse community as "a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated." (38-39). Because there are no common goals or defined roles among students in a writing classroom, some have argued, and as I will argue in this paper, writing classrooms should not be referred to as discourse communities. One of the best explanations for this comes

from John Swales, who points out in "Approaching the Concept of Discourse Community," that a genuine discourse community, unlike a writing classroom, has a unified mission:

> The discourse community has a communality of interest; i.e. at some level members share common public goals. (The goals are public; spies join discourse communities for private purposes of subversion; people may join membership sporting clubs with disguised commercial or sexual intentions.) (The common public goal may be not that apparent on the surface level. Suppose, for example, there exists a discourse community of legislators, their aides, lobbyists, political journalists, etc. As we know, this community will consist of overtly adversarial sub-groups, but they all will share some goal such as manufacturing legislation) (5).

Though the theory differs slightly, research on "communities of practice" also provides insight into the social frameworks I address throughout this paper. Etienne Wenger's emphasis on a social theory of learning in *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity,* has helped shape the writing studies field's attention to communities of practice:

> For many of us, the concept of learning immediately conjures up images of classrooms, training sessions, teachers, textbooks, homework and exercises. Yet in our experience, learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations. The problem is not that

we do not know this, but rather that we do not have very systematic ways of

talking about this familiar experience (8).

Communities of practice, in the same way as discourse communities, are integral to how

we acquire knowledge. In "Situating Learning in Communities of Practice," Jean Lave

posits that belonging to and functioning within a community of practice is a complex

phenomenon: "Developing an identity as a member of a community and becoming

knowledgeably skillful are part of the same process, with the former motivating, shaping

and giving meaning to the latter, which it subsumes" (65). What complicates this theory

of writing as a social construct even further, Joseph Harris claims in "The Idea of

Community in the Study of Writing," is that "the borders of most discourses are hazily

marked and often less traveled, and the communities they define are thus often indistinct

and overlapping" (17). That is, the "discourse" of a discourse community may be

comprised of conventions from various other contexts.

<center>Gaining Membership</center>

It is reasonable to understand why theory of discourse community enculturation is

significant to college writing studies; writing is naturally situated in social practices and

socially constructed genres. Writing, Porter posits, is "an attempt to exercise the will, to

identify the self within the constraints of some discourse community" (41). The identities

writers form, in other words, are rooted in discourse communities, and these identities

begin to develop the moment a writer joins a new discourse community. Entering new

<center>9</center>

discourse communities, Anthony Paré states in "Genre and Identity: Individuals, Institutions and Ideology," "requires new subject positions, new identities" (65). Various challenges surface when joining new discourse communities, and sometimes, as Irene Clark points out in "Process," full participation is even denied (62).

Though the writing classroom is not perceived as a discourse community to most researchers of college-level writing, a great deal of the scholarship focuses on how students adapt to the demands of the freshman writing course through the lens of previous knowledge they acquired from their non-school discourse communities. Writing students' prior involvement in outside discourse communities may affect how they perform in the classroom. First-year writing students, David Bartholomae claims, must "invent the university" as they enter it by "assembling and mimicking its languages while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other" (624). In a similar way, writers who enter new discourse communities must acquire conventions of the new community while taking into account their lived experiences from other discourse communities and school settings.

Gaining Authority, Making Sacrifices

Enculturation into a discourse community may mean members will eventually desire to build expertise and contribute their own knowledge to an ongoing conversation within that community. Researchers have found that gaining such authority—whether in

non-school discourse communities or within their school disciplines at college—does not happen quickly or without significant challenges. Often when students enter a writing classroom, establishing authority requires considerable trade-offs. For example, Patricia Bizzell claims in "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?" college freshman "feel they are asked to abandon their less prestigious, less socially powerful world views in favor of the academic" (299). Similarly, in "Text, Role and Context: Developing Academic Literacies," Ann Johns states that students find conflicts with their home discourse communities when entering the university, "and often must drop, or at least diminish in importance their affiliations to their home cultures in order to take on the values, language and genres of their disciplinary culture" (65). The writing practices students engage in outside of school may greatly conflict with the writing they are expected to do in a college writing classroom. In *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*, Lee Ann Carroll claims that before writing students can begin to adapt to the conventions of a new writing classroom, "they must abandon their 'normal' ways of writing to adjust to the demands of a new environment and new roles" (47). The research shows that students sometimes must sacrifice their long-held beliefs and worldviews when they enter new writing classrooms or discourse communities. Enculturation is difficult, therefore, because the conventions and practices of students' various discourse communities may conflict.

<u>Self-perceptions</u>

What may add to the difficulties of enculturation, I posit, is the case of a student who has an already strong identity as a writer attempting to gain membership in multiple communities and negotiate multiple writing practices. Students who perceive themselves as good writers may face many conflicts when they attempt to master writing practices within new contexts with new conventions. Additionally, the ways students view themselves as writers may determine their roles as writers within a discourse community or a writing classroom. In "Reading and Writing Without Authority," Ann Penrose and Cheryl Geisler point to a need for writing students to "become aware of ongoing textual conversations," and "see themselves as insiders" (518). And, the extent to which students are able to see themselves as insiders is dependent on the self-perceptions they portray in their non-school discourse communities as well. In "Writing and Being Written: Issues of Identity Across Timescales," Amy Burgess and Roz Ivanic claim that "many if not all aspects of a person's self…will have consequences for the act of writing: his or her current interests, views of the world, values and beliefs, and his or her sense of authoritativeness and agency" (239). Multiple aspects of a student writer's literate background and role within a new writing classroom or discourse community will affect his or her ability to gain authority in the new setting. These aspects of identity will also affect how students approach and execute the writing situation. How students write—that is, the process and style they choose to employ across different genres—is significant to how a student enculturates into a discourse community or classroom setting.

<u>Writing Processes Across Genres</u>

During their educational experiences leading up to and throughout college, students acquire knowledge about many different ways to write. Their processes will vary from setting to setting and are always determinant of their performance in each setting. The linear process model of pre-writing, writing and revising in the past was widely accepted in the composition course (Flower and Hayes 275). Yet scholars in the field now acknowledge that writing does not occur this way in all contexts. While pre-writing, writing and revising may be a sufficient concrete model for some contexts, it may not for others. Furthermore, a universal process may not be applicable across various genres of writing (school and non-school), Thomas Kent has posited: "No single course can teach a student how to produce or analyze discourse, for the hermeneutic guessing required in all discourse production and analysis can only be refined; it cannot be codified and then taught" (qtd. in Clark 21). Furthermore, Mike Rose found in "Rigid Rules" that firm process rules and strategies "impeded rather than enhanced the composing process" (390). It is apparent that a writing process may not only be difficult to teach, but any attempt to present a single correct process may actually hinder students' ability to compose.

In addition to the literature that indicates there is no universal writing process for all contexts, genre theory suggests that genre is challenging to teach within the composition classroom when genre is presented as a rigid form. Amy Devitt, in "Generalizing About Genre: New Conceptions of An Old Concept" claims that genre is

"a dynamic response to and construction of a recurring situation, one that changes

historically and in different social groups, that adapts and grows as the social context

changes" (580). Devitt goes on to define genre as "the maker of meaning" (580). In other

words, genres are created out of contexts and contexts create genres; they are

interdependent. Genres also mediate social action within communities. Achieving

membership into discourse communities, then, requires knowledge about the genres'

function within those communities and the writing processes used to create the genres.

Teaching any genre as a rigid form has several implications, including the problem that

such a pedagogy values the product over the process and the social contexts that shape

the product. Learning rigid forms is particularly challenging in a first-year writing

classroom, as the disciplinary conventions that create genres in discourse communities do

not always exist in a writing classroom. Elizabeth Wardle states in "'Mutt Genres' and

the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" that first-

year composition teachers often face the challenge of teaching genres from a wide range

of disciplines: "…teachers are asked to teach students about and prepare them for the

genres of other disciplines when neither they nor their students are conducting the work

that calls for and shapes those genres in other disciplinary classrooms" (767). The

dilemma Wardle describes may occur in other writing classrooms as well, I argue. Take,

for example, a course on writing for business professionals. The common genres taught

in class, such as memos or reports, can and should be taught as a means of providing

students with guidelines for when they encounter these actual genres in other contexts.

Still, these classroom genres cannot always model the genres produced in any given

workplace as accurately as real-world context, as each workplace may have completely different rules and conventions.

We should give students some due credit. They may be very aware of the many definitions and characteristics of various genres at as they write for their writing classrooms and other contexts. Their processes and their unique styles that emerge from these processes help them form the literate identities they take on in each classroom and each discourse community. It is also likely that students will draw from their prior writing processes in order to create new genres specifically for a writing classroom. A question that seems important to address, then, is whether or not knowledge of the conventions, genres and writing processes learned in non-school discourse communities have any application in writing classrooms.

<u>Writing-related Transfer: What Knowledge Can Be Applied in New Settings?</u>

We know that students do not forget their writing practices from their non-school discourse communities when they enter the writing classroom. But are they able to apply this previously acquired knowledge? And, does the knowledge students acquire in writing classrooms have some application outside of the academy? If knowledge can be transferred from the academic to the non-academic and vice versa, how can this knowledge be traced from one setting to another?

Distinguishing transfer of writing-related knowledge from "ordinary learning," David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon claim in "Transfer of Learning," that transfer

"assumes learning within a certain context and asks about impact beyond that context" (3). Transfer is a phenomenon few researchers have studied, as it is difficult to trace and may take a great deal of the researcher's time. What little we do know about transfer may seem disheartening, particularly in considering the studies that have followed students from writing classrooms to other classrooms at the university. Lucille McCarthy, in "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum" finds that skills a student acquired in one class "did not automatically transfer to new contexts with differing problems and differing amounts of knowledge that he controlled" (152). When students move from the writing classroom to their disciplinary courses, and later on to a career, signs of transfer from the writing classroom may be even less apparent, if they can be found at all. Anne Beaufort's longitudinal study of a student who moves from classroom to classroom at the university and then onto a career in the engineering field, for instance, finds that the "social dynamics" of learning to write for new discourse communities could not be replicated in the classroom (118). While the genres of various disciplines can be presented within college writing classrooms, they cannot necessarily mimic the social function and purpose of those genres in real-world contexts.

Transfer, the research shows, is difficult to trace from the writing classroom to other disciplinary classrooms and non-school contexts. Part of the problem with transfer also lies in the distinction between general and local knowledge. Michael Carter, in "The Idea of Expertise: An Exploration of Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Writing," argues the need for both general learning strategies and "specialized domain knowledge," otherwise known as local knowledge, to aid writing-related transfer. A difficulty, he

points out, is that often too much value is placed on one type of knowledge over another. Therefore, even when knowledge is adequately acquired in one context, it does not necessarily transfer to another: "…the mastery of (local) knowledge in one domain has little significant effect on performance in another domain" (269). Learning the language of a new context becomes even more complex when multiple types of domain knowledge are acquired at the same time, as one type may be influenced by another during the learning process. Furthermore, acquiring one type of knowledge in isolation may not even be possible, as Chris Anson and Lee Forsberg show in "Moving Beyond the Academic Community: Transitional Stages in Professional Writing,": "…learning and adaptation do not take place linearly; while one kind of knowledge may be developing very quickly, another may develop slowly or recursively" (209).

To summarize to this point, learning is complicated by the various contexts we constantly enter and leave and the types of general and local knowledge we acquire in these contexts over time. Due to this complexity of the learning process, transfer of writing-related knowledge is often difficult to find in students' writing. What also impacts students' identity development as writers, I argue, are the many conflicts and synergies students experience as they navigate between school settings and non-academic discourse communities simultaneously.

School and Non-school Writing Exigencies

As I mentioned at the outset, Roozen, Ketter and Hunter are among the few researchers who have examined how academic and non-academic writing practices influence one another. Their findings thus far indicate that extra-disciplinary writing may enhance students' academic writing. As others have pointed out, the divide students perceive between writing they practice in the writing classroom and writing they practice in their non-school discourse communities may exist because of writing pedagogies that aim to draw boundaries between these two contexts. Teachers sometimes aim to show students how to write academically, or how to write for school in a broad sense. However, as Peter Elbow asserts in *Everyone Can Write*, "we can't teach 'academic discourse.' There's no such thing to teach." (238). What Elbow suggests here is that we cannot conflate academic writing to include writing across all academic disciplines. Not all disciplines can fall under one academic umbrella. Still, in the writing classroom, students may perceive the need to write academically; to perhaps even draw their own boundaries between school and non-school writing, acting as if the literate practices they adopt in non-school discourse communities have no place in their writing assignments. Students may desire to apply writing-related knowledge from their non-school discourse communities to their writing classrooms—and some may attempt this—but while doing so they may feel constrained by the pedagogy of the writing classroom. This disconnect between the academic and non-academic is a crucial element in my study of students who write across multiple contexts in one semester. Students' self-perceptions as writers, the

processes they employ across genres and the authority they exhibit in multiple contexts are widespread aspects of a literate self, I admit. But the intriguing relationships between these aspects, I find, inevitably will affect students' development as writers inside and outside of school. Simultaneous membership to multiple discourse communities and school contexts makes a tremendous impact on students' identities as writers. This is an issue researchers have only begun to explore.

The Problem

The literature on discourse communities and the literate identities of student writers encompasses a wide range of studies that seek answers for improving college-level writing pedagogy. A handful of studies suggest that a key to understanding students' development as writers begins with acknowledging the many non-academic discourse communities to which students belong. Few have examined how knowledge is traced from these non-academic discourse communities to the writing classroom. Even fewer look at how writing across multiple discourse communities *simultaneously*— something most everyone has done at some point in their lives—affects students' development as writers. And none that I am aware of examine multimembership specifically through the lens of student writers with already rich literate identities. We need a study, therefore, that looks not only at students' simultaneous participation in college writing classes and outside discourse communities, but also focuses on the key tensions and commonalities between their school and non-school literacies during a

defined period of time. When academic and non-academic worlds collide, how does this affect student identities at that moment? And should teachers and researchers of writing embrace students' application of extra-academic writing practices in their school writing, or discourage it? The gap in research that exists, in sum, is one that takes into consideration the many possible outcomes and implications when students with strong identities as writers, within a very short stage of their college careers, write for multiple school and non-school contexts.

Research Objective

The purpose of this qualitative research study is not to solve the problem of how to teach students who write across multiple discourse communities and academic contexts, but rather to contribute to the scholarship that currently exists on the subject. In order to explore in further depth the impact of multimembership on student writers, I set out to study in rich detail the school and non-school writing practices, discourse community roles, writing processes and styles of students with strong self-perceptions as writers. In three case studies, I analyze the conflicts and synergies the students experience as they write across school and non-school contexts in one semester. By interviewing the students regularly throughout the semester, observing their participation in their respective writing classes and analyzing their texts, my primary objective is to gain further insight into how students negotiate their school and non-school writing during a

very short period of time and how this many change their conceptions of writing and their literate identities.

<center>Definition of Terms</center>

Frequently used terms and their definitions as referenced in the literature above and all subsequent sections of this document will include:

Discourse communities—The social groups and various interactive communities in which members share a common set of rules, goals and where similar texts are produced. Discourse communities shall not refer to college writing classrooms.

School and non-school writing—The texts, including various genres, produced within academic (specifically the writing classroom) and non-academic (a fan fiction web site, for example) settings.

Identity—Within the parameters of this study, the persona and style a writer exhibits in any of his or her school or non-school texts. Identity also refers to the literate background and experiences of a writer but not his or her identity in a broad sense.

Self-perception—How a student writer views himself or herself as a writer both in school settings and non-school discourse communities.

Authority—The level of expertise or command of subject matter and composing processes one displays within any of his or her discourse communities or school settings.

Writing-related transfer—Evidence that writing-related knowledge acquired in one

context has been applied in a second context.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview of the Study

Drawing on the existing scholarship on discourse communities, writer identities and transfer of writing-related knowledge, I proposed three case studies of student writers who produce texts for multiple contexts including school, work, hobbies and other personal interests. This triangulated study included regular interviews with the students, analysis of texts from their classrooms and various discourse communities and observation of their writing classrooms.

By advertising my study through e-mails sent to instructors at the University of Central Florida and Brevard Community College, and by speaking directly to several writing classes about the study, I recruited three students. I followed these three volunteer participants throughout the spring 2011 semester as they wrote across school and non-school contexts. Two of the students were each enrolled in advanced undergraduate writing courses (one in Professional Writing and one in Advanced Expository Writing), along with other disciplinary courses for their majors at UCF. The third student was a first-year student at BCC enrolled in ENC 1101, her first writing class in decades, as well as four other classes. Each of the three students produced various extra-disciplinary texts as well.

The student enrolled in Professional Writing, Jack (a pseudonym), is a 28-year-old engineering-turned-computer science major who responds to articles on a popular technology web site and posts reviews of video games on his profile in an online video gaming community. He also keeps a journal, is an experienced blogger, and frequently jots notes and records voice notes on his Blackberry phone. In the near future, he plans to launch a web site that would feature his personal writing. The student enrolled in Advanced Expository Writing, Nikki (also a pseudonym), is a 21-year-old elementary education major who views herself as a budding novelist. Nikki has been working on a fantasy novel since she was 14 years old. She also writes frequently on a fan fiction web site, reads anime and watches anime films, and has written several poems and children's stories. Both of these UCF students have profound interests in writing.

The BCC student's identity as a writer is shaped by her background that encompasses participation in multiple non-school discourse communities over a long period of time. Jeanne (also a pseudonym) had a career in marketing that spanned more than 20 years. Never having received a formal college education, Jeanne worked in the advertising industry writing radio commercials, producing print ads and developing ad campaigns for small businesses in the Florida Keys. Jeanne has also written poetry since she was a teenager in the 1970s, and today corresponds with two social groups on Facebook. She, too, is deeply interested in writing and learning more about herself as a writer.

Over the course of the semester, by conducting interviews, observing classroom interaction and analyzing school and non-school texts, I examine the connections and

constraints between each student's multiple school and non-school writing practices. As complex as the literature that serves as the foundation for the study may be, and as difficult as it may be to draw explicit conclusions from three case studies within such a short period of time, my research points to what I view as a significant exigency in the composition field: the need to look more closely at students' simultaneous participation in multiple discourse communities during a short period of time and how this participation molds and re-molds strong literate identities.

This chapter describes the methods used across the three case studies I conducted over the spring 2011 semester. What follows is a discussion of the main research questions that framed my study, participant recruitment strategies, data collection and data analysis procedures used to gather information from the student participants.

Research Questions

The Central Question

- How does simultaneously writing across multiple school and non-school contexts impact the literate identities of student writers over the course of one semester?

Sub-questions

- What effect does simultaneous participation across multiple school and non-school contexts have on the self-perceptions of student writers?

- What benefits or consequences do students experience by altering their writing processes as they write across multiple genres simultaneously?

- How does simultaneous participation in multiple writing contexts appear to impact a student's ability to establish authority as a writer?

Design of the Study

Given the qualitative nature of discourse community research, I determined that conducting case studies of student writers would be the most effective research strategy for addressing my questions. Initially, in the fall of 2010, I proposed that the ideal student participants would most likely be non-traditional community college students who write for multiple non-academic and academic contexts, including the first-year composition course. I was originally seeking participants who juggled school, work and family life, and had multiple writing tasks required of them in each of these settings. At the beginning of the recruitment process, however, finding these ideal candidates posed many challenges. My criteria were too narrow. Under a short time constraint, I quickly expanded the study to include UCF students and students enrolled in *any* writing class, not just first-year composition. The case studies of these students would encompass three primary methods of data collection: interviews with each participant, observation of each participant in his or her respective writing class (face-to-face or online), and analysis of each participant's texts. By designing the study so that the students and their writing would be examined using at least three different methods, the credibility of the findings

would be enhanced. Gabrielle Griffin, in *Research Methods for English Studies*,

emphasizes the importance of triangulating research methods:

> Deciding on a particular research project is to a significant extent about deciding
>
> on the specific research skills, methods and methodologies necessary and
>
> appropriate to conduct that research…This should not, however, blind one to the
>
> fact that all research requires more than one research skill or method (though not
>
> usually through methodology). For instance, if one decides to write a biography
>
> one might conduct archival research, textual and document analyses, interviews
>
> and discourse analysis, as well as employing visual methods and skills (6).

Though my study will not include all the methods Griffin mentions here, employing at

least three methods—primarily interviews, observation and text analysis—will help

corroborate my results and bolster the integrity of my suggestions for future research.

Timeline and Setting

The case studies in this report were conducted over the course of the spring 2011

semester at the UCF main campus, the BCC Melbourne campus, online via e-mail and

online classroom communication, and in public locations where participants agreed to

meet regularly for interviews, based on participants' schedules and availability. Given

that all three student participants held numerous academic and non-academic obligations,

I anticipated occasional cancellations and rescheduled meetings throughout the semester.

I communicated with the participants over the phone, e-mail and text messages,

depending on which communication methods the students preferred. Classroom observations took place in both face-to-face and online courses. With instructor permission, each week I observed Jeanne's face-to-face Monday night section of ENC 1101 on the BCC Melbourne campus. Jack and Nikki were both enrolled in online writing classes, so I requested permission from each of their instructors to be added to their classes on UCF's Webcourses for observation purposes. During my meetings with the students outside of school settings and through e-mail, I gathered copies of their school and non-school texts for a thorough analysis. The students and I also discussed their texts during our meetings. Throughout the semester, I kept a notebook of my observations in which I made notes of potential focal points for the study. This would later prove to be beneficial in formulating my primary claims, organizing my arguments and drawing preliminary conclusions from the study's findings.

Justification of Human Subject Research

While taking a purely theoretical approach to this research may have been less time consuming, I ultimately determined that a project involving human subjects would provide the most insight to build on previous case studies of student writers who write across multiple academic disciplines and non-academic discourse communities. The best way to discuss the subject of student writers who write across multiple contexts, I believed, was to work with these students firsthand. Professional researchers of college-level writing claim there are many benefits that come out of working with human

subjects. Interviewing subjects especially, Griffin explains, "is a useful research method for understanding people's views and perceptions as producers and consumers of literary texts" (192).

Risks and Benefits

Foreseeable risks to student participants were minimal. Students who received poor grades in their writing courses may have felt uncomfortable discussing the matter during interviews. Some students may have felt apprehensive about sharing writing samples with me—particularly samples containing private or personal content. I anticipated that the benefits to participants would by far outweigh the risks, however. A major objective of the study was to help the student participants understand the concept of discourse community enculturation and how knowledge they acquire in social contexts continuously contributes to their developing identities as writers. Additionally, the study aimed to help students gain perceptions of writing not as a universal skill or process, but as a socially situated activity that differs greatly from context to context.

Protection of Participants

Careful efforts were taken to ensure the privacy of student participants and all identifiable information they shared with me was not disclosed to anyone. All written and recorded information provided by the participants remained confidential. Data collected, including interview voice recordings, interview transcripts, writing samples, and

classroom observation notes, remained in a safe storage space only accessible to me. To further protect participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used throughout this written report.

<div align="center">Recruitment</div>

My human subjects research proposal was approved by the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board in the fall of 2010 (see IRB outcome letter, Appendix A), and I began recruiting student participants in the spring of 2011. Prior to initiating the recruitment process for my study, I enrolled in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program and developed an Explanation of Research form (see form, Appendix B). This form was presented to participants at the beginning of the semester in an effort to clearly explain the requirements of the study at the outset. Signed consent was not required. Participants were also informed verbally and in writing that their participation was voluntary and that they reserved the right to withdrawal from the study at any time.

After receiving approval from the UCF Institutional Review Board to move forward with my research, I contacted the BCC Melbourne campus provost to obtain permission to conduct my research on campus. Once permission was granted, I began the recruitment process by contacting a BCC writing center administrator, who also taught four sections of composition. I spoke to several of the administrator's classes, passed around sign-up sheets for students who expressed interest or wanted more information,

and posted fliers about the study in the Melbourne campus writing center. Unsuccessful in recruiting students in my first few weeks of attempting, I reached out to many other BCC instructors and eventually expanded the scope of participants to include UCF students and students enrolled in any writing or English class, not just first-year composition. I contacted several UCF writing instructors who shared information about my study with their online and face-to-face classes. Broadening the participation criteria paid off tremendously, as it resulted in the recruitment of three students with more diverse literate backgrounds and writing interests than I ever could have anticipated.

Ideal Candidates Identified

In all recruitment materials presented to potential participants, I identified the ideal candidate for the study as:

- A student enrolled in at least one writing class

- A student interested in learning more about his or her writing practices

- A student who writes for purposes outside of the classroom, including, but not limited to extracurricular writing activities, professional or on-the-job writing, or personal writing

- A student willing to volunteer time to the research and share his or her school and non-school writing samples with a researcher

I should note that while I remained open to accepting participants of all kinds, I believe the study naturally attracted students who were very interested in writing. That is to say

by advertising the study as one that centers on students who write outside of school, those who expressed interest in participating were most likely to be students who perceived themselves as good writers. The implications of this are discussed in further detail in the Limitations section below.

Preliminary Screening Interviews

For each student who expressed interest in participating—either by contacting me directly or by writing their name and contact information on a sign-up sheet I had passed around in class—I conducted a preliminary screening interview to determine whether or not the student would be a good fit for the study and if the student was genuinely interested in participating. Students eligible included those who practiced multiple genres of writing, regardless of the type of writing class they were enrolled in or their major disciplines. Potential participants were excluded if they practiced fewer than two genres of non-school writing, were unwilling to share writing samples or were unable to commit to regular meetings outside of school. After conducting preliminary interviews with approximately 10 students, the three finalists were selected based on their current writing practices and their willingness to participate.

Interviews

Having recruited three student participants by the first week in February 2011, I scheduled individual meetings at locations convenient to each student in order to establish a plan for the remainder of the semester and to provide students with a general overview of what to expect in terms of topics that may be discussed and questions that I may pose. Each student committed to 30-to-60-minute interview sessions once per week at college campuses and public locations. These sessions were recorded using a digital recorder, with verbal permission obtained from all three participants.

Interview topics varied from case study to case study and were partly shaped by the writing classroom assignments and non-school writing the students were working on at the time. Given that the conversations would inevitably vary across the participants each week, in order to establish consistency, I chose weekly themes for interview questions that were asked of all three students. These themes, which were derived from the study's main research questions and my ongoing assessment of what the students seemed most interested in discussing, included:

- Definitions of discourse communities
- Conceptions of "good" writing in school and in non-school discourse communities, and what are considered writing "skills" in these contexts

- Knowledge of and awareness of different processes and genres in different contexts

- Definitions of authority in discourse communities and authority in writing

- The student writers' self-perceptions

- Transfer of writing-related knowledge from one context to another, and the different theories surrounding this topic

Many of the interviews also centered on the students' school assignments and their extra-academic writing practices. I often asked each student to bring samples of their school and non-school writing for us to analyze together. As we discussed the texts, I asked questions directly relevant to how the students' simultaneous participation across multiple writing contexts influenced what they wrote. For example, when Nikki wrote an essay for Advanced Expository that incorporated fictional characters from her non-school discourses, I probed her as to why and how the characters enhanced her school assignment.

Though I attempted to gather comparable data each week across all three participants, due to the complexity of the qualitative study, interviews sometimes veered off onto topics unrelated to the questions I had prepared for each meeting. As expected, follow-up questions were asked frequently. This interview format seemed to work well, and proved to be very beneficial to the study, as the open-endedness of the conversations often led to discussions about aspects of writing that seemed crucial to the participants' developing identities as writers. This form of in-depth interviewing, Penny Summerfield asserts in "Oral History as a Research Method," lends itself to more detailed responses

from participants and requires more flexibility on the researcher's part: "Interviewers ask follow-up questions, prompting their interviewees to elaborate and explain what they mean; they do not tick boxes. The conversation thus pursues areas unanticipated by the researcher and as a result not all interviewees are asked the same questions" (53).

Collecting Texts

In addition to interviewing, I collected school and non-school texts from each participant. These included texts produced within the participants' extra-disciplinary discourse communities, such as Jack's technology forum posts and Nikki's fan fiction stories, as well as writing assignments produced for their respective writing classrooms. I also collected private texts from some of the participants, such as Jeanne's unpublished poetry. The students emailed their documents to me and shared them with me during our weekly meetings. They were only asked to share the texts that were central to our discussions and texts they felt comfortable having me read. If they perceived any of their writing as too private or embarrassing in any way, I did not push them to share it.

Classroom Observation

In order to, as effectively and efficiently as possible, understand the scope of the many different types of writing-related knowledge students were acquiring in their respective writing courses, I observed their classrooms in the following manners:

- By sitting in on Jeanne's ENC 1101 section (with instructor permission) that met once weekly on Monday nights at BCC. During class meetings, I took notes on the lessons that were presented, the teacher's conceptions of academic writing as conveyed to her students, and Jeanne's interaction in the classroom.

- By joining Jack's online section (with instructor permission) of Professional Writing taught via UCF's Webcourses. Observation in this class consisted of reading the course materials provided by the instructor and reading Jack's posts and responses to his peers on the discussion boards.

- By joining Nikki's online section (with instructor permission) of Advanced Expository Writing, also taught via UCF's Webcourses. As in the Professional Writing class, observation in this class consisted of reading the course materials provided by the instructor and reading Nikki's posts and responses to her peers on the discussion boards.

Other Communication

On occasion, the participants—especially Jack—contacted me outside of their classes and face-to-face interviews to share their thoughts on topics we had not discussed previously, or to add their newly developed perspectives since our previous conversations. These casual interactions, though not required of the participants, brought intriguing information to the table that would later supplement data collected from the interviews, student-produced texts and classroom observations. Any of these additional

conversations that the students initiated via e-mail, phone and text were considered

relevant and became subject to data analysis. While these instances of communication

were certainly not anticipated, they sometimes supported findings about the students'

identities as writers and called attention to important aspects of the students' writing

practices that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Data Analysis

My process of analyzing data from the study followed three main steps:

transcribing interviews, reading through all data collected (interview transcriptions,

student texts and classroom observation notes) and lastly, coding the data according to

areas of primary concern as described in the research questions posed at the beginning of

this chapter. I do not intend to indicate that the analysis process was purely linear,

however. Throughout the entire study, including the data collection process, I conducted

preliminary analyses of each of the students as they engaged in multiple writing

processes. Following the collection, I further explored my preliminary observations and

analyses by managing the data in an organized fashion.

Transcriptions

Each week over the course of the semester I gathered approximately three hours

of voice recorded interviews on a digital recorder. I manually transcribed the interviews

word-for-word, using transcription software only to slow the voices for ease of typing.

Each interview transcription was saved to my personal laptop computer and marked according to the date and topic discussed. As I transcribed each interview, I made notations of particularly relevant data and took notes in a separate document that I could reference at a later time. All interviews were completely transcribed by the first week of May 2011.

Reading and Organizing Data

After all data had been collected and interviews had been transcribed, I organized the transcriptions, writing samples and observation notes chronologically for each participant. All of these printed documents were kept in a three-ring binder and divided into three sections (one section for each participant). Over the course of about two months (May through June 2011), I carefully read through all of the data in this collection and copied passages from the interviews that I felt were most critical to the study. I also made notations as future reminders to refer back to significant writing samples and classroom observation notes. I then proceeded to code the copied interview passages, text samples and observation notes.

Coding Data

Developing a carefully organized, tiered approach to coding data in a qualitative research study is critical, Griffin explains in "Discourse Analysis":

Coding can be done in two main ways. Both will impact on the analysis you

produce. Thus, you can code in an open manner, meaning you code everything

that you consider of interest in a text, and then refine those codes through

repeated re-reading and re-coding, resulting in, for instance, the merger of certain

codes that seem similar, or the creation of higher-order categories under which

sets of codes are subsumed (104-105).

Following the process Griffin describes, I read and re-read all data collected

(transcriptions, texts and observation notes), analyzing it for general points of interest.

From this initial coding, I then developed and refined my research questions, which

would serve as guides for coding the data more precisely. Most all data coded in the

analysis related to my central research question: How does simultaneously writing across

multiple school and non-school contexts impact the literate identities of student writers

over the course of one semester? In order to categorize this data, I coded it as it related to

each of the study's three sub-questions. Thus, I analyzed the data's relevancy to:

- The effects of writing in multiple school and non-school contexts on students'
  self-perceptions as writers
- The apparent benefits or consequences students experienced as they engaged in
  multiple writing processes simultaneously
- The students' ability to establish authority as writers in their multiple school and
  non-school contexts

In addition to analyzing each participant individually, the final stage of the coding

process was comparing and synthesizing the conflicts and synergies experienced by all

three students as they wrote across their school and non-school contexts in one semester.

<u>Limitations</u>

As with every primary research endeavor, this study was not conducted without

flaw. Beginning with the recruitment process, some limitations became apparent. As

someone with a full-time day job, I could not commit to observing any student enrolled in

a daytime writing class or in a face-to-face class in Orlando (about an hour drive from my

workplace). Therefore, my inability to greatly flex my schedule limited the range of

students that could have participated.

Secondly, the design of the study lent itself to attracting students who were truly

interested in at least one genre of extra-academic writing and felt confident in their skills

as a writer. These were not ordinary students. Though their backgrounds and interests in

writing were fascinating, I do not believe they accurately reflect the literate identities of

the majority of college students, traditional or non-traditional. On the other hand, this

limitation may call attention to the need for further research on college students with very

strong identities as writers. Jack, Nikki and Jeanne raise awareness of how already-

involved in writing some of our students may be as they attempt to adjust their literate

practices within the writing classroom. Over the next three chapters, I examine in great

depth and detail the self-perceptions, writing processes, and senses of authority the

students exhibited during my time spent with them.

CHAPTER FOUR: JACK

Within days following most of our hour-long interview sessions, Jack usually contacted me via e-mail or text message to reiterate what we had discussed and share what he felt we had not adequately addressed. He never seemed satisfied with the extent to which we covered our weekly topics. This need for more exploration of a topic appeared to be a central characteristic of Jack's identity as a writer. While this characteristic benefited him in many of his non-school writing practices, it conflicted with his conception of what writing should be in his Professional Writing class: clear, concise and to the point. Jack says he genuinely enjoys writing at length for many different contexts, and feels compelled to be thorough:

> If something speaks to you and you want to talk about it, and you think you have something important to say about it, then people should know. And I think this is the biggest challenge, for me personally at least. The ideas, the concepts that you've formulated in your mind, to put that on paper in a precise manner (4 Feb. 2011).

Jack's thoughtful consideration about how he will transition from one style of writing to another will come into play several times throughout the spring 2011 semester as he negotiates the demands of writing across school and non-school contexts simultaneously.

An Overview of Jack as a Writer

Jack's enthusiasm for expressing his thoughts in writing began to develop when he moved to the United States from Germany in 2002. The 28-year-old computer science major received his associate's degree from Brevard Community College in 2006. Immersed in several technological discourse communities, from online technology magazines to online gaming communities, Jack is adept in what he calls "internet culture." During the spring 2011 semester, he navigates between multiple literate activities. Among the many roles Jack plays, he is a math tutor, a gamer, a part-time Blockbuster employee, and a manager of multiple residential properties owned by his father, an astrophysicist. Adding to his list of responsibilities, Jack is also a University of Central Florida student enrolled in three classes in the spring of 2011: Intro to Computer Programming, Statistics and Professional Writing.

During one of our first interviews, Jack shared with me his motivation for participating in the study. He always aims to improve his communication skills and acquire knowledge, he says:

> I like to convey my thoughts. Maybe I just like to think, and the rest of it is an extension of it, you know? Because you come across something that's interesting to you and you have your own thoughts about it, and I think that's really where all the great literature comes from, is those people who wrote it felt a need to communicate it (4 Feb. 2011).

Jack's need to communicate his thoughts in depth is apparent in much of his school and non-school writing. He feels that the generic conventions of his Professional Writing class, however, constrain him to writing succinctly and prevent him from going into rich detail. The conventions of his non-school writing, on the other hand, often allow him the flexibility of going into as much detail as he needs and wants.

Writing Online: The Discourse of "Internet Culture"

Jack spends a great deal of his time on the internet. Primarily, he belongs to three online discourse communities in which writing is practiced: a private forum where only he and his friends converse and post links, Arstechnica (a technology magazine), and Steam (a video gaming web community). Within each online community, Jack plays a different role and his writing practices vary. On his personal forum, which was created mainly to socialize and share links to humorous YouTube videos with friends, Jack describes his writing as informal and often sarcastic. It is intended to be this way: "Everything is crude and harsh, but meant in a good way. Like when your best friend calls you a douchebag, you know? It's not hurtful at all even though it could be perceived that way by other people" (19 Feb. 2011). In this self-created discourse community, therefore, Jack perceives himself as a true insider, which is not surprising. On his personal forum, to write well means to write with wit, edge and intentional insults. It is all in good fun, he says.

Where roles are more formal and writing is viewed more critically by members of the discourse community is Arstechnica. Though Jack has an Arstechnica username, he seldom participates in discussions on the site. He enjoys reading the articles and comments posted by other members of the Arstechnica community. While his participation is minimal on Arstechnica, he sees great value in reading what others write:

> It's not like I'm sitting here with friends and I want to talk about computers, but you don't, and I make them listen to all this computer stuff. But you can go online and go to a web site that's talking about computers and technology and lasers and all kinds of science stuff, and those people are already on there that want to talk about it (19 Feb. 2011).

Jack's participation is more passive than active on Arstechnica. In the online gaming community, Steam, however, he is more directly involved. Here, he belongs to chat groups and plays games in real time with a core group of friends who live in different locations across the world: "I've met some of my best friends online…It's not like they're my best friend who lives (in his current city of residence), but it's just like we completely mesh" (19 Feb. 2011). Similarly to Jack's private forums, the Steam forums allow Jack to converse with friends who share his interests: "The forum is already based on the people you met and enjoy, so on the forum it's all playful banter. You're just talking with each other. In the game itself, you're still having to deal with people you don't like" (19 Feb. 2011). Enculturating into Steam requires command of the community's language practices and knowledge of gaming conventions. It requires members to act with what is perceived as appropriate behavior by others in the

community and acquire knowledge of its genres and how to use them. As Devitt posits,

learning a genre "means knowing not only or even most of all, how to conform to generic

conventions, but also how to respond appropriately to the given situation" (577). Jack's

enculturation into his online discourse communities, therefore, will depend on how he

uses language and interacts with others in those communities.

<div align="center">Jack's Private Writing Turning Public</div>

A fourth non-school writing practice of Jack's is his personal journaling and note-

taking. Toward the end the semester, Jack shared with me that he keeps personal voice

recordings on his Blackberry phone in addition to a diary on his computer. Jack takes

notes about anything that piques his interest. He does this because he wants to keep a

record of his thoughts and any ideas he thinks may be useful in the future:

> I can create, but I can't remember. And that's how I feel all the time. I have this
>
> great idea, but I don't remember what I was thinking about. And that's why I have
>
> my Blackberry…So I usually just write it down or record it on there. I think I
>
> have about 50 voice notes on there. And on my computer, you don't even want to
>
> see the desktop of my computer (15 April 2011).

Jack refers to his random voice notes and diary entries scattered across his computer

desktop as "creative fragmentation," and he has developed a framework for how he might

organize and consolidate them into a project he has been planning for a quite some time:

the launch of his own web site. Jack has a plan for the format and structure of the site and

how he would like to use it to organize his many writings, but the content of his writing itself is difficult for him to explain to me. "Anything," was his initial reply when asked what it is exactly that he has been writing about for so long. Then he elaborates: "Mostly, just like analysis of circumstances, like if I watch a movie, I have a document in my phone of movie reviews…I don't know. When I drive in traffic, for example, I'll notice a shortcoming of how traffic lights work" (15 April 2011). Indeed, Jack writes about anything from philosophy to personal experiences. Jack's practice of compiling of various texts is similar to a practice of one of Roozen's study participants, Angela, who "incorporated an entire constellation of genres into her journal as poetry, song lyrics (some copied from popular songs that she enjoyed, but original lyrics as well), short stories and quotations…" (From Journals to Journalism 549). Collecting multiple genres and keeping them in one place undoubtedly is a sign of a strong literate identity, especially for a student writer. When I learned how variegated Jack's private writing practices are, our conversation turned to his purpose and goals with the texts he keeps on his phone and computer:

Jack: The purpose is to remember. That is the purpose, really.

Autumn: Why is it important to remember?

J: Because I think they're important things. I think a lot of this, the
          purpose of our existence is to make sense of things. And every
          little analysis, every little bit of knowledge, little realization that
          you have needs that purpose. And I think I've mentioned that my
          motto is to always improve, which means always pay attention and

be aware of what's happening and learn from that. So when I go

out and I pay attention and I realize things, and I feel like I

wouldn't remember, which is every time, then I'm compelled to

write it down (15 April 2011).

Jack divides his diary entries into two separate categories: one for his "analyses of circumstances" and one for his "more personal emotional stuff." His goal is to organize his personal writings from the two diaries and his Blackberry into one document. The objective, he explained, is to have all of the writing he would like to post on his web site accessible in one place. To illustrate the plan for his web site, he brainstormed the structure on a piece of notebook paper (see Figure 1). He also developed a "blueprint" for the site (see Figure 2).

creative fragmentation

currently:

- blackberry notes
- random txt files on PC
- blackberry voice notes
- diary entries
- paper scraps
- memory

one place, important: allow for diversity!

if diary is: personal events and emotional
reaction to my day:

→ it is very narrowly defined.

my solution / still need to use blackberry
requirement: notes & voice memo for when on road

on PC: diary linked through dropbox

ease of
transfer → diary more widely defined to
importance   hold anything! (problem: two diaries)

Proves: to not loose organisation:

Date Started | Topic is blah blah

in First Entry

17 Apr blah ~~~~   edits 1,2,3,...
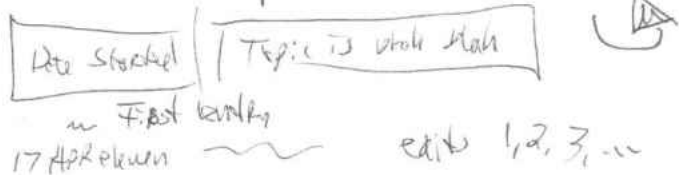
Figure 1: Jack's Creative Fragmentation Brainstorming
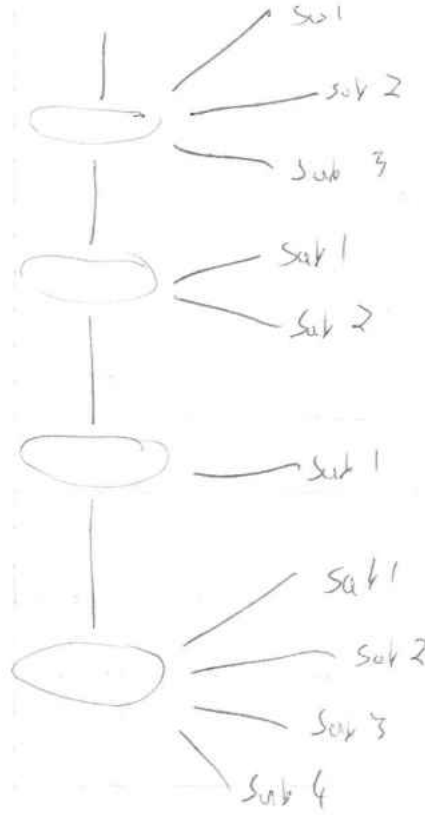
Figure 2: Jack's Website Blueprint

At the bottom of Figure 2, it is telling that Jack writes "I like optimization. I have drawn diagrams of how I handle addresses, passwords, calendar." What this says about Jack's identity as a writer is that he is truly compelled to thoroughly plan out every aspect of his writing in order for it to be efficient.

It appears that one of the most important aspects of Jack's proposed web site is its structure. Another important aspect, he explained, is the persona he takes on in his writing: "I might want to have my perspective moved so it is easier for me to play devil's advocate," he wrote in an email following one of our interviews. "I am a nice guy (for the most part xP) but I might be able to accomplish more as a writer if I write in a mean, challenging way." In our interview following that email, Jack elaborates on what he meant by "mean" and "challenging": he wants to prompt reaction from his readers. And while challenging his readers is important to Jack, he wants to make sure he does so cautiously:

> Should I really be a douchebag on there? Should I really challenge people that much?...The purpose of the web site is I want to put my ideas out there in the rough. Completely stupid and maybe childish sounding ideas, and then, people challenge them, you learn something more about the topic (2 April 2011).

From Jack's perspective, writing online is about much more than conveying information or persuading an audience; its purpose should also be to make social connections with others who either agree or disagree with his viewpoints, to initiate intelligent discussions with others and to acquire knowledge. Jack wants writing to be a very meaningful and socially embedded experience. He anticipates few, if any, obstacles

in initiating conversations on his web site. By contrast, when he attempts to generate responses and facilitate discussions on the Webcourses discussion boards in his Professional Writing class, he finds that, by and large, his peers do not share his writing goals—at least not for the class. For many of Jack's classmates, meeting the minimum requirements (writing short posts once a week and responding to at least two other posts) is sufficient enough.

To this point, I have described Jack as an individual who is very involved in writing practices outside of school. The writing he does in his online discourse communities, while stylistically and rhetorically tailored for each community, is generally well thought out, detailed, and intended to generate an ongoing conversation. He perceives his writing as a meaningful act, not just a communicative function. These conceptions of his non-school writing, he will find, are far different from those in Professional Writing.

<u>Jack's School Texts: "Getting to the Point" in Professional Writing</u>

Professional Writing, according to the teacher's syllabus, aims to give students "a theoretical and practical framework for producing and assessing texts for real-world audiences." There are three major kinds of texts Jack produces in this class: Webcourses discussion posts and response posts to his peers, Facebook group discussion posts and a group assignment—a service learning project that requires collaboration in the researching, planning and writing of a report for a public awareness campaign.

Each week, the instructor provides the students with articles to read and the students must respond to the readings on the Webcourses discussion boards. Jack perceives that the purpose of this exercise is to practice writing as clearly and concisely as possible: "I think the forum posts she wants from us, it's like take a quick stand, an opinion on what you really believe, which I think I have a problem with, the whole quick, short comment….because if I read something I'm interested in or if I'm just asked to make a comment, I like to explore every single facet of it and go into detail" (19 Feb 2011). Indicative of what Courage and others have claimed about students feeling a disconnect between school and non-school writing, it is clear that Jack feels constrained in Professional Writing by not being able to fully flesh out his responses on Webcourses.

The conventions of the business genres taught in Professional Writing (resumes and cover letters to name a couple) also conflict with Jack's non-school writing practices. In a two-page email he sent me following one of our interviews sessions, he recapped our discussion about tone in writing and tagged the email with a "P.S." to express the frustrations he was experiencing in class:

> P.S. I didn't find a proper way to tie the following into the above structure, so here it goes. In the last week, there has been a little bit of disillusionment regarding the impact of my professional writing class. There are some concepts I have incorporated into all my writing that I have not been happy with its outcome. Writing professionally means getting to the point, and choosing the most effective words to communicate your intent. However applying this to all my writing has left me wanting. Sometimes it's just fun to use a certain abstract word or to slyly

subdue your sentences with alliterations. This can actually be appropriate in

certain situations, if it lets you have a greater effect on your audience. (9 Feb.

2011).

Jack wants to be very thorough in his writing, even in the emails he voluntarily writes to

me. But in Professional Writing, he perceives that being thorough is not regarded as an

important aspect of business communication; what is more important is being clear and

getting a message across. This is not to say that Jack disagrees with the brief and clear

nature of professional writing, but that his identity as a writer is not as in sync with this

type of writing as it is with his online discourse communities.

Jack's Issues with Facebook

During our first meeting, Jack shared that his involvement with "internet culture,"

is rooted in his desire to stay connected with the world and keep apprised of

technological advancements. "Being part of internet culture is being ahead of everyone

else," he said. As mentioned previously, Jack frequents the gaming web site Steam, the

technology magazine Arstechnica and chats with his friends on their private group forum.

In general, Jack enjoys spending time online. He feels distain toward at least one web

site, however. Jack's Facebook account was hacked about a year before he began

participating in this study. Because of this incident, and because he is not fond of

Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg, he has boycotted the most popular social

networking site in the world. It is not difficult to imagine Jack's reaction when his

Professional Writing instructor made participation on the course's Facebook group a mandatory, graded course requirement. Initially, Jack fought the teacher on the requirement, but ultimately agreed to compromise. He would participate in the Facebook discussions under one condition: he would be permitted to open a new account under a pseudonym. The teacher agreed to his condition. During our second meeting, Jack further explained his feelings about Facebook. Aside from the fact that his account had been compromised and that he did not like Mark Zuckerberg, he believed that Facebook at one time distracted him from more important parts of his life:

> I had it all plugged in. I had a Facebook app on my Blackberry, I was updating at the gas station, which is not a good idea. I was all into it, but it does become kind of stressful. All of the sudden, this was interesting too, you have this shift in perspective where you see everything as how good this post is and how am I going to write this on Facebook? Which kind of takes away from your firsthand experience (4 Feb. 2011).

Despite Jack's uneasiness with participating in the Professional Writing Facebook discussions, he opened a new account under a pseudonym and joined the group. The Facebook component of the course was an "experiment," Jack's teacher stated in her syllabus. The major project for the course—a social media campaign—served as the rationale for instituting the Facebook requirement. However, the teacher indicated at the outset that Facebook was not to be taken as seriously as other aspects of the course: "If this experimental element doesn't seem to be adding anything to the course, we may eliminate it temporarily or permanently as some point," she wrote. "We'll decide that

together." By the end of the semester, the Facebook discussions had dwindled significantly and Jack had blown off Facebook participation entirely. Yet while the Facebook experiment did not turn out to be as involved as Jack had anticipated, the few responses to articles he did post on Facebook appeared to give Jack an outlet to incorporate a writing style different from his Webcourses posts. He admitted that on Facebook, he did not worry too much about writing "properly" in this context. In fact, he appeared to write similarly to how he wrote on his personal online forums. This indicates that Jack may have experienced what Harris calls "overlap" between "students common discourses and the academic ones of their teachers" (17). In a February 9 Facebook post, for example, Jack responds freely to an article the class read on social networking, cyber bullying and college policies by first criticizing the article's author then ending with a humorous comment:

> …The situation is compounded by the fact that his link to the Stacey Snyder case clearly states that her loss was attributed to the fact of poor performance as an EMPLOYEE (his emphasis) in the teacher role, rather than the sharing of information of information on the web as a student. Well, while we are all veering off topic, let me tell you about the syrup I had today. It was very good (9 Feb. 2011).

While Jack would have preferred not to join Facebook, he at least initially found that writing on Facebook more closely related to the writing he practices in his various non-school discourse communities. Writing on Facebook, it appeared, presented both barriers and opportunities for Jack. He did not ever grow to like the idea of a Facebook fan page

as a required course component, but contrastingly the activity allowed Jack to put more of his own voice into his responses; it allowed his identity to come through much more than other assignments of the course did, particularly the group public awareness campaign.

Writing Together: How Jack Took Charge of a Dysfunctional Group

The major assignment in Professional Writing, a group public awareness campaign, accounted for 20 percent of the students' grades. Because the class included a service learning component, students were challenged to address a real-life social issue and find a local organization related to their cause that they could present their campaign to. Students were permitted to form their own groups. Jack wanted to form a group of students he perceived as thoughtful, decent writers who appeared to write good posts on Webcourses. By the time he made contact with those individuals, however, they had already formed a group with the maximum number of people allowed. Jack scrambled to find a group that did not yet have the maximum number of members. He settled for a group that expressed interest in making their campaign about anti-bullying. Having an interest in the issue of cyber-bullying specifically, Jack joined their group.

It is not uncommon for group projects present many challenges, obstacles and bring forth personality conflicts among students. Time constraints and coordination of schedules also make group collaboration difficult. Jack viewed his group as significantly dysfunctional. They waited until the last minute to complete every assignment. They had

a difficult time making contact with one another and delegating tasks. And as the newest group member, Jack did not initially feel empowered to take on a leadership role and motivate his group members to get the project done. They barely met the deadline for their project proposal that was due early on in the semester, and as more of the project's deadlines approached, Jack's frustrations increased. The week before spring break, he vented: "Now it's getting really stressful because it's not getting done. I mean I've been pretty busy myself, but I think I'm just going to have to put the hammer down. They don't call me the Iron Fist for nothing (laughing)" (4 March 2011). When I asked what Jack meant by the Iron Fist, in the same way he explains most things, he went into great detail of how the nickname came to be:

> There's a back story. When I came over from Germany, I was a different person then, nicely phrased. German people are very by-the-book. Have you ever heard of German bureaucracy? It's like another religion in German. Everything is so strict, very stressful, I don't like it. But that's how I was back then (pounds his hand down on the table), so they call me the Iron Fist (4 March 2011).

Jack jokes about using the "Iron Fist" to motivate his group members, but in reality he never actually communicates with them in a forceful or demanding way. By continually urging his group to meet and complete tasks as efficiently as possible, however, Jack does manage to get the group organized, on task and motivated to meet all of the project's deadlines. The group also met face-to-face with the instructor at one point, who provided some motivation as well and advised them to keep their focus on their

campaign's audience. Toward the end of the semester, a written progress report is due.

Jack describes it as a "success story" during one of our interviews:

Jack: I don't know if I was just being crazy because I was tired, or if I was like stressing out for two days straight, but I looked at it (the progress report) and I was like wow, this is some good writing. I really like it.

Autumn: What made it good?

J: Um, I think the sentences were easy to read. When you have a lot of commas and your thoughts are all over the place, it's kind of hard to read. I used a couple of big words on it, nothing too crazy…And the structure, everything in the introduction was giving an introduction to the topic, but at the same time it was like referring back to every single segment too. This was the introduction, this is what we did, the concept, the information, the challenges, the timeline and the solution. I think that all just fit together really well (9 April 2011).

Jack felt that by taking a leadership role in his group, they were able to produce a good piece of writing together, despite communication and scheduling challenges they had dealt with. He was pleased to make progress and accomplish all the required tasks. However, Jack's desire to be thorough and detailed in his writing appeared to conflict with the deadline-driven, collaborative nature of the group writing assignment. He took

note of one pitfall of the group's progress report, for example; it had different "tones" throughout its nine pages:

> I didn't really have enough time to edit everything because that would have taken another two hours, so it just has a shortcoming now, and I think that's why we should have done a style sheet. You write on there what tone you want to use…Maybe it wasn't that big of a shortcoming, but I just felt like it was a little off (9 April 2011).

Though Jack did not feel a sense of completeness with his group's project, he ultimately seemed satisfied that the project had been turned in. And, he felt that his German heritage played a role in leading the group toward a successful public awareness campaign. Jack's literate identity and his background as an assertive "by-the-book," German aided him in the group collaboration process.

To this point, I have given an overview of Jack's experiences in writing across school and non-school contexts during the spring 2011 semester. Continuing to address the interplay between his multiple writing practices, I will now turn to how Jack's simultaneous participation in various literate activities impacted his self-perceptions as a writer, his ability to transition from one writing process to another across different genres and the development of his identity and authority as a writer.

In "Self-efficacy, Beliefs, Motivation and Achievement in Writing," Frank Pajares posits that "students' confidence in their writing capabilities influence their writing motivation as well as various writing outcomes in school" (139). In general, Jack has a very high confidence level as a writer. English being his second language does not seem to impact his self-efficacy whatsoever. Furthermore, Jack says he has a greater appreciation for English than he does for German. He feels that he has more freedom in the English language as far as word choice and usage, for instance: "Why I like communication in America better is nobody gives a flip over here. Everybody just makes up words…But in Germany, you actually have a council of sage, wise old men and they decide what grammar and the dictionary looks like" (18 March 2011). Jack may have been exaggerating here, but his argument is that he finds the English language to be more flexible as far as usage and more interesting as far as vocabulary.

Since Jack moved to the United States, he has felt compelled to build his speaking and writing skills. His vocabulary is an aspect of his writing in which he perceives himself to be most proficient. He attributes his vast vocabulary to the books he has read. When he came to Florida for the first time, he read numerous books—well-known literature of varying reading levels—to help him develop his speech and writing in English. In an excerpt from his introductory Webcourses post in Professional Writing, Jack describes this learning process:

Once I landed upon these shores, I decided to work my way up to proper reading. I concede that my view of proper reading is somewhat snobbish, as I usually regard books that are big and stuffy as such. My favorite book would be Fyodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment. In my first year here, I picked up Moby Dick, only to resort to my dictionary twenty times per page. One could say the flow of the story was somewhat hindered, the former already being of the sluggish kind. Then I realized I was bound to start at the bottom, as wise, and then work my way up through the high school required reading lists. I started with Alice Through the Looking Glass, Chronicles of Narnia, and as mentioned before, Harry Potter. Thereafter came the obligatory affair with such books as Death of a Salesman, The Scarlet Letter, and Babbit. A whole year after that was spent retracing the inspirations for The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (http://imdb.com/title/tt0311429), favorites being Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray. Most recently I have finished The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo series (one night sittings, I can highly recommend those), and Ken Follet's "The Pillars of the Earth." (13 January 2011).

Jack's experience reading a wide range of world literature plays a tremendous role in his developing self-perception as a writer and his confidence in his vocabulary. He feels that having read as many books as he has, he is now able to express his thoughts in writing more eloquently than before he had read the books. One aspect of Jack's writing that he feels is weak, on the other hand, is his knowledge of grammar rules and sentence structure: "I still forget rules. Do I start a sentence like this? Where do I put the comma?

Do I need a comma? I'm not good at commas. That's a good summary. I hate commas.

So that's probably my weakest point" (18 March 2011). What is more important to Jack

as a writer is putting his voice into his writing, even in school writing assignments:

> If it's teaching me a new ability, I'll be happy to do it, and I'll do it in the best
>
> way possible. I want to add my own touch to it. So I always feel that
>
> way…There's always going to be an aspect of me in my writing, and even when
>
> there's certain guidelines, maybe I'll still end up taking some of it. If I get a letter
>
> grade less, I'm usually fine with that too. I guess it's where you see your values,
>
> you know? (18 March 2011).

For Jack, then, the meaning he conveys as a writer is far more important than the form his

writing takes.

How Jack Alters his Process and Style Across Genres

When Jack says his personal motto is to always learn and improve, he genuinely

means that he seeks ways to apply his knowledge acquired both in the writing classroom

and in his non-school discourse communities. Throughout the spring 2011 semester, he

constantly looks for ways to use the writing processes and styles he learns about in

Professional Writing to his non-school writing. For example, in one of the readings

assigned in class, he learns that putting the most important thing at the end of a sentence

can make the statement more rhetorically effective:

I'm just flailing around, structuring my sentence however I think is good, but I've

never had this overlying purpose of OK, I know this is the most important thing to

say, so I put this at the end of the sentence. I never knew this. So this is one of

those Aha! moments (2 April 2011).

Jack went on to say that he plans to use this rhetorical tool with the writing he eventually

will post on his personal web site. Contrastingly, a principle Jack learned in Professional

Writing that he did not perceive as useful in his non-school genres is the emphasis on

"getting to the point." Much of his diary writing is emotional or based on emotional

experiences in his life, he explains, and does not lend itself to the brevity of Professional

Writing styles: "Bullet point one. My grandpa died. Doesn't work" (2 April 2011).

In Jack's online discourse communities and in his private writing, he knows how

to write appropriately, what jargon to use, and what tones to take. In his Professional

Writing course, however, the conventions are not as familiar to him. Yet Jack does not

attempt to figure out the conventions of the course in order to fit in, as the literature

suggests most students do. Instead, he attempts to make his posts on the Webcourses

discussion boards stand out from the rest of his peers' posts. Rather than "regurgitating

the readings," (26 February 2011), a process he believes most students follow on the

discussion boards, Jack tries to contribute new knowledge to his Webcourses

conversations. Jack's writing here indicates that he is repurposing a practice from the

writing he has produced on one of his personal forums. On one personal forum post, for

example, a response to another user asking for recommendations on good anime films,

Jack provides a detailed review of the anime he has watched and includes several links to

anime web sites that support his claims. In a similar fashion, in a February 25

Webcourses discussion about fonts, Jack uses the same approach of inserting hyperlinks

to articles and web sites about fonts. He explains his decision to write the post this way:

"I don't feel like just being like 'I think the book discusses really well how you use

fonts.' So I wanted to do something different and that's how the post came to be. And I

was very happy with what I wrote" (26 Feb. 2011).

Roozen has studied in depth how students "repurpose" or "retool" private writing

processes for their academic writing. And it appears that Jack has actually repurposed

some of this private writing in his Professional Writing class. He also demonstrates that

he intends to repurpose his school writing for his non-school writing. This is evident

when he discusses the plan and organization for his future web site:

> I really like all these parts in class which actually correlate with your structure.
>
> Your structure is not just some arbitrary thing that's dictated by grammar. You
>
> can't just throw your meaning into it without any purpose, no...And this is another
>
> thing. This is where persona comes in. The content mostly will be anything on my
>
> mind that I want to write about. Now is the question, like how much am I going to
>
> dilute the message and the purpose of the web site by keeping it super general? If
>
> I write about my trip to Germany and I write about how quantum physics and
>
> your perception of reality coincides, I don't know if it's going to mesh too well
>
> together (2 April 2011).

Here Jack shows that he is putting great thought into the design of his web site based on

the lessons about content and structure that he has learned in class. These instances of

repurposing are indications that as Jack acquires knowledge in his multiple discourse communities and school contexts, he is able to apply some of that knowledge simultaneously across contexts as he writes. It is a promising sign that he and other students have the ability to repurpose school and non-school writing processes and styles throughout college and beyond. Additionally, the implications of this repurposing on students' ability to develop identity and authority in writing need to be considered more carefully. If Jack simultaneously practices writing across multiple discourse communities and applies processes from one genre for another, how will he be able to develop into a seasoned writer in any given context?

Jack's Identity and Authority as a Writer

In each new writing task Jack encounters, he exudes confidence in completing the task. Jack feels he has developed more authority in some of his discourse communities than others and certainly more in his non-school discourse communities than he has in his Professional Writing class. In Arstechnica, he plays a more passive role in the article discussions because he perceives himself as a newcomer compared to others who post comments on the site. On Steam, he exhibits a higher level of confidence. In his profile description, which he accompanies with a stock photo of a bloodied shirtless fighter, he states right at the outset that he is an experienced gamer: "If you've ever been beaten in a game before, you've met me. I am the fabric of your nightmares, a shadow that never lets you abandon doubt and, on playful nights, a dagger dancing with your soul"

(Steamcommunity.com). When we discussed his profile during one of our interviews, Jack described it as mere "smack talk" (4 April 2011). Yet Jack's smack talk appears to be a norm of the Steam community. Though his level of confidence does not necessarily equal his level of authority, had Jack written a description of himself in a less confident, less commanding way on Steam, he may not have portrayed himself as a true insider in the online gaming discourse community. Written and verbal communication on Steam can help one become an insider if done in a way that challenges others and projects an image of authority, Jack says:

> In this community, faking it most consistently establishes your authority. It's not like faking it in a bad way, it's just showing that you can play at the highest level of these taunts, and that proves your authority. But in itself, it's just smokescreens really (15 April 2011)

Jack's awareness of his role on Steam exemplifies what Charles Bazerman claims in "The Problem of Writing Knowledge" about writers commanding authority: "Writers' self-consciousness about the power of words is what has allowed them to wield that power, to engage in the world through their words. Self-consciousness, reflexivity, to a writer is simply knowing what you are doing, not undermining what you do" (507).

While establishing authority in the gaming world of Steam is important to Jack, it is not important at all in his personal forum discussions, he says. As he explained early on in the semester, the conversations on his personal forums are just "playful banter," after all. Nor is authority important to Jack in his private diary entries and notes: "If you're just writing for yourself, you don't have to have authority because you 100 percent agree with

what the person writes because it's you" (15 April 2011). If his private writing eventually

becomes public on his own web site, Jack indicates that in order to be perceived by his

audience as an authority on the topics he writes about, he must take on a different

persona. A "mean, challenging tone" is what Jack believes will help him achieve his

goals on his web site:

> For the same reason Glenn Beck gets a lot of response. By being ridiculous, you
>
> draw attention, but really, basically what I said before, if you just state what
>
> everybody states before you and you re-state it, nobody's going to be interested.
>
> But if you say it in a challenging tone, I think it'll get people to respond (2 April
>
> 2011).

Writing with authority, for Jack, is not only becoming an insider within a discourse

community as Penrose and Geisler have suggested (518), but it is more importantly

writing that generates responses. On Arstechnica, Jack does not post comments often

because he does not always perceive himself as an authority on the subjects of the web

site's articles. On Steam, he believes he has a better command of the subject matter

(video games), and in his personal writing, he does not believe authority is necessary.

The challenges Jack faces over the course of the semester lie partly in his varying levels

of authority in each of his writing contexts. Jack may never be able to gain authority in all

of the writing he does, but as Carter has suggested about writers, their development

"demands a greater flexibility than the strict reliance on local knowledge" (274). In other

words, authority requires not only knowledge of the conventions of the writing practice

alone in itself, but also a broader general knowledge of different socially constructed

writing practices. In order for Jack to develop his identity as a writer and establish authority in new social contexts, then, he must be willing to adapt his general knowledge of writing to his writing practices in the many new writing situations he will encounter.

<u>Discussion: The Impact of Simultaneous Participation on Jack's Identity as a Writer</u>

In just one semester, Jack's literate practices are so abundant that it would seem impossible for each practice not to cross discourse community and writing classroom boundaries in at least some ways. There are several instances of Jack's non-school writing impacting his school writing and vice versa. And, there are some key conflicts and synergies he experiences that are significantly influential on his developing identity as a writer. This clash of Jack's literate worlds has much to contribute to the conversation on how students write across multiple school and non-school contexts.

The Conflicts

The "get to the point" conception of good writing in Jack's Professional Writing class does not mesh well with his strong desire to elaborate in great detail with everything he writes. Jack is confident, eager to learn and generally enthusiastic about writing, but he does not perceive a great value to the concise, simplified language he is expected to use in Professional Writing: "That's not a style I enjoy writing, personally. When it's required, that's the best approach, when I use it, but not when I write something for myself" (9 April 2011). Jack perceives his personal non-school writing as what Dias et al.

and others have pointed out many times: that often students' school and non-school writing practices are worlds apart. Though Jack understands the conventions of writing in Professional Writing, he does not see value in these conventions for his non-school discourse communities.

A second conflict I observed is broader in scope, but nevertheless affects Jack's motivation and performance in Professional Writing: his negative experience with Facebook and the mandatory requirement to post on Facebook in Professional Writing. Joining the social network for the first time since his privacy was compromised on the site brings about a slight resentment toward the course's purpose and objectives. Jack's circumstance may be unusual of college students, but what it may indicate to teachers and researchers of writing is that no matter how well they believe a course can be designed to appeal to all, students' extra-academic experiences and cultural backgrounds always have the potential to conflict with the writing requirements of the class. Ketter and Hunter have demonstrated a similar conflict in their study participant, Erin, who experiences a clash of ideals in writing for her public relations internship:

> Generally, she attempts to provide what alumni readers might wish to hear…However, she also tries to be accurate in conveying her sense that the students accomplished less than they might have. In negotiating among these varying demands and constraints, she pushes up and tests the constraints of the genre (325).

Jack, too, tests the constraints of a genre when he challenges the Facebook participation requirement in Professional Writing. His insistence on joining the activity with a

pseudonym makes a strong statement about his identity as a writer. While Jack does not like the Facebook requirement, he ultimately makes do with the demands of the course and participates as much as he needs to receive a grade. As of this writing, though, Jack has not cancelled his pseudonym Facebook account.

The Synergies

Though Jack and other students in this study do not always see valuable applications from their writing courses to their non-school writing, there are some synergies that occur over the course of the semester when they write across multiple contexts. For Jack, one connection between his online forum posts and his posts on the Professional Writing discussion boards is his goal of eliciting reader response. To him, writing well in any forum-like setting is writing that sustains an ongoing conversation. Additionally, the more online conversations become argumentative or shed light on viewpoints that Jack was previously unfamiliar with, the better the he believes the conversations to be. In Professional Writing, despite Jack's efforts, the online conversations never developed into the intellectual threads that he envisions on his future web site. However, he did at least demonstrate to his classmates his perspective on how a forum post should be written, and in doing so he repurposed a writing practice from his non-school discourse communities. This evidence of repurposing reinforces the critical need for researchers and teachers of college writing to, as Roozen claims, "follow

participants' mapping of relevant activities, regardless of how different they seem or how distant they are temporally" (Tracing Trajectories 347).

A second synergy between Jack's school and non-school writing relates to how Jack approaches the structure of his writing in multiple contexts. While Jack struggles with finding any practical application of writing that "gets to the point," the clarity component in this style of writing, perhaps, gives Jack direction on how to organize his future web site. By the end of the semester, he had designed a blueprint of the site's organization. The purpose of this blueprint was to simplify his plans so he has a clear vision of how to structure the content for the site. The writing he posts on the site may still take on the detailed, elaborate style that Jack prefers, but having a clear organizational map to guide him in the design process may indicate that Jack has applied what he has learned about the importance of organization from Professional Writing. In addition, toward the end of the semester, Jack had decided to simplify the scope of his video game reviews on Steam: "I'm actually going to write it for every game that I beat and when I beat it, I'm always going to start with how long it took me" (9 April 2011). Here, Jack appears to be repurposing knowledge he has acquired in his writing classroom for a non-school discourse community. Though clarity and concision in writing are just minor components of his Professional Writing class, they are components that contribute to what Porter calls the intertextuality of writing across discourse communities, and suggests that Jack and students like him may be "borrowing the appropriate traces" of writing from one context for another (43). Jack's honing in on a specific kind of game review, and organizing the structure of a web site, suggests that Jack may actually

72

perceive some value in the concise, simplified writing that is central to his Professional

Writing class after all. Whether Jack sees this type of writing as valuable in other writing

contexts is yet to be known.

<p style="text-align:center">Conclusion</p>

Because Jack has such a multifaceted literate background and, during just one

semester, he employs several writing practices, his case alone cannot provide a single

answer to the research question at the core of this study: How does simultaneously

writing across multiple school and non-school contexts impact the literate identities of

student writers over the course of one semester? Jack's case does, however, support some

of the theory that exists on multimembership and raises awareness of the need for

researchers to pay closer attention to the non-school writing practices and rich literate

backgrounds of college students. What we know about students who practice multiple

genres of writing within multiple contexts, Roozen has claimed on several occasions, is

that these students' writing practices "continually shape and reshape another" (From

Journals to Journalism 568). And by examining Jack's writing processes, self-perceptions

and levels of authority across contexts, I discovered just how complex these forces re-

shaping his writing practices actually were.

Participating in multiple discourse communities and a writing class had a

tremendous influence on Jack's self-perception as a writer. Corroborating Burgess and

Ivanic's claim that all components of a student's self affects his or her self-perception,

<p style="text-align:center">73</p>

many aspects of Jack's identity, such as the "Iron Fist" and his need to be thorough, contributed to how he approached writing tasks in Professional Writing and his non-school discourse communities. These aspects of his identity, he found, had to be altered and sometimes sacrificed (such as when he felt constrained by "getting to the point" in Professional Writing) as he moved across contexts.

Jack's writing processes and styles inevitably changed several times as he practiced multiple genres over the semester. He attempted to, on a few occasions, repurpose his writing from his non-school discourse communities for his Professional Writing class (for example, when he included hyperlinks in his Webcourses discussion posts). This benefited Jack as a writer, as he appeared to enjoy the act of repurposing, but it was not always received well or appreciated by his peers in Professional Writing.

Lastly, Jack's simultaneous participation across writing contexts played a major role in how Jack developed authority as a writer. Carroll's theory of how students must "abandon" their normal writing practices to develop authority in the classroom is not sufficient in explaining what happened to Jack. He did not aim to develop authority in Professional Writing in the first place. Nor did his authority in any of his non-school discourse communities appear to change over the course of the semester. Jack does not care about becoming an insider or expert in any context he is not already part of at this point in his life. What is most notable about Jack's identity as a writer is his desire to think deeply about, challenge and explain each writing situation he participates in so that he acquires as much knowledge as he possibly can.

CHAPTER FIVE: NIKKI

Diligent and highly self-motivated, Nikki is a 21-year-old UCF junior with ambitious goals as a writer. Nikki is also aware that the different rhetorical situations she encounters will determine the way she approaches her writing. She is willing to flex the ways she writes in different contexts in order to fulfill her objectives:

> What I need to do to get the prize. I think that pretty much sums it up...it can be an A, it can be getting published and making a ton of money, it can be making someone smile as in fan fiction, but as I look at other works and say "this person did that to reach that goal," that's what I need to do, and that affects my persona I think more than anything. Setting your goal and knowing your audience, that is the key to any writing, I believe (6 April 2011).

No matter who Nikki's audience happened to be as she wrote across multiple school and non-school contexts throughout the spring 2011 semester, she put great effort into all of her writing. Yet her goals and audiences for her non-school writing and school writing were entirely different. Nikki was aware, as many other students are aware, that her teacher was her primary audience and would assign her a grade. The problem of teachers perceived by their students primarily as examiners is not anything new. Joseph Petraglia, in "Writing as an Unnatural Act," states that, "it is no secret to student-writers that the audience for their writing—assignment notwithstanding—is a teacher who is paid to evaluate how well they have understood the information delivered in class" (95).

It is Nikki's awareness of her Advanced Expository Writing teacher as her audience that creates tensions with her previously held conceptions of good writing. In addition to being a student writer, Nikki also practices various non-school genres of writing that are very different from the writing she does in Advanced Expository Writing. She is deeply involved in fanfiction.net, a web site where she posts stories about various characters and setting of popular books and movies. It is a community of writers who may not necessarily wish to publish, but write for the sake of the literature and films they enjoy. Most of Nikki's fan fiction stories are about her favorite book, *The Outsiders*. In addition to her fan fiction writing, Nikki is working on a fantasy novel, a project she started as a teenager. In this chapter, I examine Nikki's school and non-school writing practices, how she alters her writing processes across multiple genres throughout the semester, how her self-perceptions change over the semester, and how she attempts to establish authority in her writing. All of these factors, I argue, contribute to Nikki's developing identity as a student writer, a fan fiction storyteller, and an aspiring fantasy novelist.

An Overview of Nikki as a Writer

It is Nikki's first semester at UCF. She graduated from BCC with her associate's degree in the fall of 2010. Living on the main Orlando campus, it is easy for her to become involved in extracurricular activities, including glee and anime clubs. Both of these clubs, along with her involvement in the fan fiction world and her fantasy writing,

she says, fall under a category she refers to as "geek culture." During one of our first interviews of the semester, she explains:

Nikki: A lot of people who do fan fiction like anime, and a lot of people have been called chorus nerds before. And so it all kind of fits together within that community.

Autumn: So all of these different communities fall under one umbrella?

N: You could say that. Some people might take offense to that. But that's the basic gist (16 Feb 2011).

After college, Nikki would like to work in the publishing industry, either as a novelist or an editor, she says. Because of her interests in publishing, she considers majoring in creative writing, but toward the beginning of the semester she switches to elementary education. I questioned her decision, as when I first met her she seemed adamant about majoring in creative writing. "I'm the kind of person, I change my mind a lot," she responded. Indeed, Nikki changes her mind frequently, and this practice is particularly relevant to her writing processes. Recursive indecisiveness may be one of the defining characteristics of Nikki as a writer. She believes her difficulty with committing to her writing is an area in which she needs improvement, particularly when it comes to her novel: "It seems like every six months I'm starting over. I guess I'm kind of meticulous about my writing" (8 Feb. 2011). While Nikki may believe herself to be meticulous about her novel, when it comes to her fan fiction, she rarely re-reads or edits her stories before posting them online. In both her novel and her fan fictions, she is not as attentive to grammar and structure as she is with detail: "For me, I would rather focus on

the plot, because all that (grammar and mechanics) can be fixed with an editor. Or a fan fiction beta reader. I'm more concerned that I have good characterization and that I have an interesting plot" (23 Feb. 2011). She goes on to say that commas are "her worst enemy" and spell check is "her best friend" (23 Feb 2011).

For Nikki, writing is less about being correct and more about being interesting. Interesting, that is, to whoever her audience may be. In her school writing, the only audience she truly considers is the teacher. In her non-school writing, however, the audience is more meaningful to Nikki. She places high value on the feedback she receives from her audience on fanfiction.net, for example.

Don't Be a Mary Sue: Good Fan Fiction Yields Positive Reviews

Nikki has been writing fan fiction for about five years and considers herself a knowledgeable insider in the fan fiction discourse community. "I live on there," she explains in our first interview of the semester. Nikki has written more than 40 fan fiction stories and most of them are based on *The Outsiders*, but others are based on *Naruto*, her favorite anime series, the Twilight series and the Harry Potter books. Nikki enjoys the process of writing fan fiction stories, but perhaps what she enjoys even more than the act of writing itself is receiving feedback from other fan fiction writers: "I think partially it's to have fun. I'll get a story idea and I just want to get it out on paper. I also like getting reviews because most of the reviews are positive and it's just a way of starting my day off right" (16 Feb. 2011). On fanfiction.net, there are some main characteristics of good

writing that members of the discourse community must display if they want to be respected, Nikki explains during one of our interviews:

> Nikki: There are a lot of them (fan fiction stories), and there are people who are really serious about fan fiction and that I am one of them. Asking "please be kind" when you review in a summary is a definite no-no.
>
> Autumn: Why?
>
> N: It just sounds really unprofessional and it makes people realize your story is probably going to be really bad from the start. It makes them not want to read it.
>
> A: What are some other no-nos?
>
> N: Don't insert yourself in the story, especially in a romantic manner. People will find you out (16 Feb. 2011).

Inserting oneself in a fan fiction, Nikki explains, creates what is called a Mary Sue in the fan fiction discourse community. Generally, Mary Sues are too-perfect, romantic characters that do not belong in a story, Nikki says: "It's unrealistic. And it also takes away from the main characters in the story and makes what we call OOC or out-of-character. Also it's very cliché. It's overused. The characters are very static" (16 Feb. 2011).

What makes fan fiction good? Most importantly, having a thorough knowledge of the book, movie or TV show you are writing about, Nikki says. Secondly, being familiarized with fanfiction.net and its conventions:

Spend a lot of time on the site. And like Wikipedia, if you see something you

don't understand, you either ask another fan fiction writer or look it up, or even

read the story and figure out, oh, this is what this is. My first time reading a

lemon, I will never do that again. A lemon is a naughty scene, I guess a sex scene.

I read that and I was traumatized, so you have to know that that's something to

watch out for too (16 Feb. 2011).

In addition to familiarizing oneself with fanfiction.net as a means of becoming a better

fan fiction writer, Nikki believes it is imperative to gather important background

information before writing a fan fiction story: "Research is a very important thing when

you're writing about the 1960s as you are with *The Outsiders*. There are people who put

iPods in the 1960s. Again, that can make a bad fan fic" (23 Feb. 2011).

While knowing the conventions of the fan fiction world is important to Nikki,

what is also important to her in this discourse community is interactivity among fan

fiction writers. In addition to receiving reviews on the stories she posts on fanfiction.net,

Nikki also participates in discussions on the fanfiction.net zeta boards, which she refers

to as "sub communities" of fanfiction.net:

It's a way for fan fiction writers to connect…And it's actually interesting because

it's not just teenagers and college students. There's one person on our board (*The

Outsiders* board) that writes. She's in her 40s with kids. It's interesting. We talk

about the troubles we have and some of the zeta board members are from Canada,

so they talk about the snow, and we have a place on the board where if nothing is

going your way or if you're angry at someone, you can complain (16 Feb. 2011).

80

Belonging to this fan fiction discourse community, then, has a deeper meaning to Nikki than generating feedback on her writing. In addition, she says fan fiction provides a distraction from her school writing when she "just can't stand it anymore" (16 Feb 2011). Fan fiction is a creative outlet for Nikki where there is no pressure to earn a grade. It is one of her non-school writing practices for which her goal is to enjoy her writing, get reviews and interact with others. A second non-school writing practice for which Nikki's goals are quite different is her novel writing.

<u>Emphasis on Detail and Development: How Nikki Envisions and Re-envisions Her Novel</u>

The prophecy in *A Light in the Shadows* (the working title of Nikki's novel) is that heroine Ember and her betrothed must defeat an evil sorceress named the Black Rose and bring peace to the lands, Nikki explains:

> They meet different people and they try to gather up a resistance to her uncle, and there's an epic battle, and then she goes and she has to fight the Black Rose. And then she finds out she thought her twin brother was dead, and oh no, he's not dead. She has to fight him and she has personal struggles with that. I have it all in my head, I just can't get it out on paper (8 Feb. 2011).

Nikki's novel has gone through many revisions over the past five years. In explaining her plot to me, she mentions that she struggles with writing out the story that is "in her head." And often when she has written several pages, she deletes them. She describes why she does this:

I get new ideas and I try them out, and I think I like that better. Or I think about

other novels I've read and I say well, OK, do most fantasy novels have 40-page

prologues? No they do not. Do I want to get published? Yes, I do. I want people

to actually read it, so I have to make it readable (8 Feb. 2011).

In "Process," Clark points to a need for more attention toward how varied student writing

processes can be and how many students, unlike Nikki who may be an obsessive rewriter,

follow a linear writing process:

The problem with this linear view of writing as a series of discreet stages is that it

does not reflect what writers actually do because writers frequently discover and

reconsider ideas during, as well as before they write, moving back and forth

between prewriting, writing and revision stages as the text emerges (8).

While Nikki constantly rewrites and has a difficult time committing to her writing in the

novel, she puts great effort into the storyline. She describes her planning process: "I

actually do a scenario in my head, have the characters in my head. I say OK, this is

happening, almost playing out like a movie. I actually see it happen like a movie in my

head, I guess, and that's how I plan out fiction writing" (8 Feb. 2011). Additionally,

Nikki uses images she finds on the internet to aid her in writing about characters and

places (see Figure 3). Sometimes she finds photographs of people or places and

"animates" them, or traces over them in Microsoft Paint before writing. She has even

designed and sketched clothes for her characters. This helps her write more descriptively,

she says: "When I finally get them looking the way I want them to look, I can look back

at the pictures and write down the descriptions. I'm a very visual person" (6 April 2011).
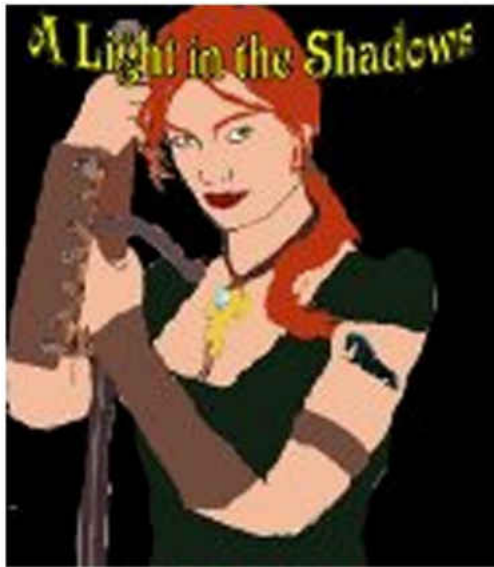
Figure 3: Nikki's Images

Taking these careful measures to write her novel, visualizing and meticulously planning her characters and settings is what Nikki sees as one of her greatest strengths as a writer. These strengths, I argue, should not be ignored when considering Nikki's identity as a student writer. What Burgess and Ivanic have claimed about student writing is that "we want to think even more broadly about the discourses that hold out possibilities for selfhood, looking at the ways in which a writer's identity is constructed, not only by the linguistic aspects of discourse and the multimodal semiotic resources the discourses proffer, but also by the other social practices in which a writer engages while producing texts" (237). Much of the literature is hopeful that we can discover relationships between the academic and non-academic worlds to benefit students' development as writers. Yet these relationships are complex and often difficult trace. For Nikki, at least, she will find that her non-school writing practices and the creative part of her literate identity are very challenging to apply in the writing classroom.

Nikki's School Texts: Writing for the Teacher in Advanced Expository Writing

Advanced Expository Writing is a three-credit hour upper-level undergraduate course that encourages students to think and respond critically to various texts. In the syllabus, Nikki's teacher writes "If you were hoping for an opportunity to flex your creative writing muscles with multiple genres, you may be disappointed." It is clear to see why Nikki, being a creative writer, was not very fond of the Advanced Expository Writing from the outset.

There are two main genres in the course: Webcourses discussion posts and essays. The Webcourses assignments are somewhat different than the open-ended discussions that many other online courses feature. Students must respond to specific questions (often they number their answers in the posts). Nikki says the posts are "like quizzes." Many of the exercises ask students to simply revise the mechanics of sentences. For example, here is an excerpt from one of Nikki's posts on March 12, 2011, titled "exercise in concision":

Before

1. You will not be charged your first monthly fee unless you don't cancel within the next 30 days.

After

1. You will only be charged our first monthly fee if you don't cancel within the next 30 days.

Many of the exercises such as the one above ask students to re-write sentences to make them better. Nikki makes it clear in our discussions that she finds these exercises limit her abilities as a writer. She finds more flexibility in the essay assignments, though the essays are significantly more challenging than she initially expects them to be.

Going into her first semester at UCF, Nikki perceives school writing as something that simply has to be completed: "I'm just doing what I have to do. Do the research and make it cut and dry. You know, it's writing, but it's not writing for enjoyment. I do my best to make it sound good, but I don't put as much effort into it" (8 Feb. 2011). Nikki also perceives school writing as something that good writers can "BS": "I hate to say it, but using your skills as a writer, it's a lot easier to fudge things up and make yourself

sound smart even if you're not" (8 Feb. 2011). Nikki feels that the act of "BSing" is mostly about figuring out what the teacher wants. This is not unordinary of a college student in a writing classroom. Linda Bergman and Janet Zepernick, among many other scholars, have recognized how very aware students are of their teacher-as-primary-audience, they demonstrate in the results of their study:

> …All of the participants seemed to have internalized a strong sense of the real rhetorical situation of the classroom. In almost every response to every question, study participants showed their conviction that the purpose of school writing is to get a grade, that the audience is the teacher, and that a successful paper must take into account both stated constraints (length requirement, number of sources and sometimes even sentence types that must be included) and unstated (a teacher's known preference for papers that exceed the length requirement, or a teacher's obsession with what students typically see as meaningless details) (133-134).

Nikki is keenly aware that her teacher is her audience and for this reason she feels she can effectively BS her way through writing assignments, yet she still faces difficulties with her essays. She has trouble, for example, becoming motivated to write her first essay on how the ancient rhetor Cicero would react to the No Child Left Behind Act: "It's kind of a pain. I had to do a lot of research for it, and I don't usually mind doing research, I like doing research. But it's just kind of dry, boring and politic-y and that's not really my thing" (16 Feb. 2011).

Nikki is more motivated to write the second essay assigned in Advanced Expository Writing, which asks students to describe a time when they were ignorant of

something and eventually became enlightened to its meaning and purpose. They must relate it to the assigned reading, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Students are given the opportunity to select a topic of their choice for their personal ignorance/enlightenment anecdotes. Nikki chooses to write about her experience reading about the character Professor Snape from the Harry Potter series. Throughout the series, Snape is portrayed as an enemy of the young wizard Harry Potter, but at the end of the series it is revealed that he is actually the boy wizard's ally. Nikki relates this story to another fictional character, Itachi, from the Naruto anime series:

> I'm actually talking about how I hated Professor Snape at first because I was ignorant of his past and who he was as a person, but when I become enlightened to who he was and realized, hey wait a second, I judged him too fast, this changed my judgment of the anime character…If I didn't have the experience with Snape I probably wouldn't try to understand that character's motives and past before I judged him (16 March 2011).

Nikki completed her essay and said she was pleased with it when she turned it in for a grade: "This one I was able to force myself to write a little better, a little more, because it was a subject I was interested in and an expert on. So I could be the expert once, which is nice" (6 April 2011). Though Nikki was happy to have the opportunity to write about something she knew well, when she received her grade, a 78, she realized she had focused her writing too much on the characters she was familiar with and not enough on Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," the reading the essay was supposed to be centered on. Her instructor gave her an opportunity to revise the essay at the end of the semester. She

incorporated more of the assigned reading into the essay and received an A on her final draft.

Nikki's use of characters from her non-school literate identity is very similar to Roozen's study participant, Kate, who brought elements of her fan fiction writing into her English courses:

> In re-deploying fan fiction in these kinds of private and more public ways, Kate continued to recognize her extensive engagement with fan fiction as an asset to her participation in English studies and an important element of the literate identity she was developing as an English major (Fan Fic-ing English 149).

While Nikki may also view elements of her fan fiction discourse community and other non-school writing practices as assets to her developing identity as a writer, there is at least one aspect that sets her apart from Kate: at the top of Nikki's mind, no matter what the school assignment may be, is what she must do to get the grade she wants. Therefore, Nikki's motive for her instances of repurposing is not genuinely engaging in her school writing as Kate and others may have done. Nikki's motive, it appears, is mainly to use her self-perceived skills as a writer to earn the best grade she possibly can and move on.

Nikki's Self-perceptions as a Writer

Nikki's passion for fiction plays a large role in how she views herself as a writer. In general, she is confident that she can perform well at any school writing assignment. She has received excellent grades throughout school, and believes that even if she is

unfamiliar with the content she is writing about, she can "BS" her way through an assignment: "I like to be able to write my way out of a paper bag, like if I don't understand something, I can creatively put it into words, where the teacher thinks I know what I'm talking about" (1 March 2011). Like Jack, Nikki is very confident in her ability to write in general. Another of Nikki's self-perceived strengths as a writer is her careful attention to detail and character development in her fan fiction and novel writing. Being detailed is very important to her. Her practice of finding images to help her write her characters and envisioning her story as a movie in her head, as mentioned previously, is evidence that she indeed is a "very visual person" (6 April 2011).

While Nikki believes herself to be a good writer in general, she also acknowledges her weaknesses, which are rooted in what I referred to earlier as her recursive indecisiveness. She struggles with organization and deciding what to keep and what to cut out of her writing:

> It's really hard to do. I can write, yes, but organizing and trying to choose what stays in a book, what readers want most…For me, I like hearing all the back story, but if I keep doing the back story before the story even starts, the book is going to be this big (motions with her hands). It's going to be bigger than the Lord of the Rings by the time I finish if I keep doing that (6 April 2011).

Nikki's perceived shortcomings as a writer in her non-school writing are content-based. In her school writing they are more form-based. Features such as comma usage and MLA formatting are areas Nikki recognizes a need to improve, for example. Halfway through the semester, she seeks help with her grammar and MLA formatting at the UCF

writing center: "Citing is a weakness of mine, and I went and had them check my citations. And the grammar is a lot better because I actually went to the writing center" (6 April 2011). It appears that the Advanced Expository classroom, along with her previous experiences in writing classrooms, is reducing Nikki's concerns to the level of form, grammar and mechanics. This may be correlated to how students, as McCarthy suggests in her study of Dave, tend to latch onto the concrete conventions of writing each time they enter new classrooms:

> His focus on these new rules of use appeared to limit his ability to apply previously learned skills…and kept him working at the more concrete summary level. This domination by the concrete may often characterize newcomers' first steps as they attempt to use language in unfamiliar disciplines (139).

In addition to her struggles with grammar and MLA formatting, Nikki feels that a major pitfall of her school writing practices is that she waits until the very last minute to complete her assignments: "I am a very good procrastinator, which is not a good trait in a writer…If it's a later deadline, like oh, it's not due until the end of the semester, I'll just throw it off and it'll be the day of, and I'll be like oh, wow, I have to write this (27 April 2011). Nikki's self-perception as a generally good writer who pays attention to detail but lacks skills in formatting and completing assignments in a timely manner will impact her performance during her first semester at UCF. Transitioning between her writing for multiple classes and finding time to fit her non-school writing into her schedule, she discovers, is very difficult. It takes more than just being able to BS and write her way out of a paper bag.

How Nikki Alters Her Process and Style Across Genres

Wenger has suggested that identity as it relates to writing studies is shaped by more than one community of practice; one's identity is a "nexus of multimembership" in which our many social practices are intertwined and influence each other (159). With regard to student writers, the theory of this "nexus" suggests that students simultaneously practice various genres of school and non-school writing that all contribute to their literate identities. Nikki's multimembership is significantly influential on her identity as a writer during the spring 2011 semester. Not only is she a busy student enrolled in five classes, an active member of anime and glee clubs, but also she chooses to write substantially in her free time, drafting chapters for her novel and posting stories on fanfiction.net. How, I was curious to determine, did she transition from genre to genre, from discourse community to discourse community and then to the writing classroom during this short period of time? And what impact did this simultaneous participation have on her writing? Not surprisingly, Nikki's response when I asked her these questions was that she had to sacrifice time working on her non-school writing to focus on her school assignments. This is not uncommon of students entering new classrooms and taking on additional academic responsibilities. After all, as Devitt has posited, "the literature is full of stories of the students who must make choices between their communities and academic lives" (65). Good grades are important to Nikki, and therefore she allocates more attention toward her school writing and attempts to manage her time carefully: "I try to work on them one at a time. One day I work on one and I set a day to

work on another. Because if I tried to work on them all at once, I would just have a blowout…It definitely leaves less time for personal writing" (23 Feb. 2011). When Nikki does find time to write fan fiction or work on her novel periodically during the semester, she views her non-school writing as a distraction from her school writing:

One of my biggest problems, I spend too much time in the fan fiction world and not enough on schoolwork, and I need to balance that…And I think learning to adapt is something I have to get used to. Learning to adapt my style in my Advanced Expository class, learning to write in a different manner for a class…every professor is different. Every course is different. I've learned that no two writing courses are the same (27 April 2011).

Nikki's belief in her need to adapt to new contexts shows that she is aware of her membership to multiple discourse communities. She is also aware of how her identity as a writer is constantly changed by her involvement in these communities. She has no plans to drop or sacrifice any of her non-school writing practices entirely, and she does not plan to take a lighter course load in future semesters. She will take four classes over summer and five in the fall: "My head is going to explode," she joked during our last meeting of the spring semester. And while Nikki desires multimembership and being busy in general, it is peculiar that as she employs various processes across her multiple genres of writing, she attempts to prevent one kind of writing from interfering with another: "I make separate times to write them. I decided not to do them in the same day if at all possible. I don't want to start talking about Naruto one day and then start taking about Don Quixote (a reading from her World Literature class)" (27 April 2011). Yet while she

attempts to isolate her classroom assignments and non-school genres by working on them at different times, it appears that the stylistic features of her non-school writing sometimes appear in her school writing. Take, for example, the following introduction from an early draft of her ignorance/enlightenment essay:

> In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, men are chained in a dark cavern with their eyes forward. Behind them is a fire as they sit chained they see figures walking back and forth behind them. These figures are like shadowy puppets and the men are not able to discern them for what they are. One of the figures is unchained. He is allowed to go into the sunlight and see the world for what it really is, learning he was wrong in his presumptions. Such, is the journey of ignorance and enlightenment (Essay 2, 25 March 2011).

When we discussed Nikki's descriptive introduction to this essay, she explained to me that she was able to write with a process and style she would have used in her novel or a fan fiction story. She drew on her process of envisioning characters for her fiction writing and repurposed it for a school essay. She may have attempted to separate her school writing from her non-school writing, but despite her efforts, conventions of her fiction writing surfaced in her ignorance/enlightenment assignment. This, I believe, emphasizes what Harris says about the interplay of academic and nonacademic discourses:

> What we see in the classroom…are two coherent and competing discourses but many overlapping and conflicting ones. Our students are no more wholly "outside" the discourse of the university than they are wholly "within" it. We are all at once both insiders and outsiders (19).

Three things are clear about Nikki's writing practices by the end of the semester. First, she acknowledges the need to adapt her process and style as she moves from genre to genre and from context to context simultaneously. Second, she feels the need to work on her different genres of writing separately to prevent any crossover between them. And lastly, while she attempts to separate the conventions of her school and non-school writing practices, she still finds it enjoyable to repurpose processes and styles from her non-school genres for her school genres. Nikki's multimembership is complex and it is not possible to comprehend the depth of its influences in just one short semester. Adding to her challenges of negotiating multiple processes and genres is her desire to become a better writer within the writing classroom and her multiple non-school discourse communities.

Nikki's Identity and Authority as a Writer

When asked about how knowledgeable she feels she is in the fan fiction discourse community, Nikki describes her authority as a fan fiction writer by saying she is a "first degree black belt." She is more familiarized with her fan fiction discourse community and its writing practices than any other: "I've been doing it about five, six years now almost and probably even before I knew what I was doing, I was writing fan fiction. It's what I spend most of my time doing. If I have free time, I'm on fanfiction.net" (16 Feb. 2011). Nikki measures her authority as a fan fiction writer by her years of experience and the positive reviews she has received on some of her most recent fan fiction stories. She

has spent ample time working on her fantasy novel as well, but she does not feel she exhibits the same level of authority in her novel writing as she does in her fan fiction stories. Furthermore, Nikki feels she is unable to measure herself as a novelist for two reasons. First, her novel writing is not public like her fan fiction. In fact, she has not shared her novel with anyone other than her close family members. Therefore she has received minimal feedback. Secondly, the novel is not complete, and Nikki continuously deletes her writing and changes her storyline. She struggles to commit to what she has written and does not have a clear organizational plan for the novel. It appears that Nikki may be lacking the scaffolding needed to develop as a novelist that may come from belonging to a discourse community of novelists. She has acquired what Carter would refer to as a general knowledge of the fantasy novel genre, but she may be lacking local knowledge. Acquiring both kinds of knowledge is how good writers develop expertise, Carter suggests: "Competent writers can work within a variety of writing domains with some effectiveness, but it is only when writers work in one or more domains for a while that they begin to develop the local knowledge of that domain" (282). Carter goes on to claim that "we must recognize that all knowledge and learning is situated, an idea that demands we make our writing instruction situated as well" (283). Nikki has a strong desire to develop her authority as a novelist: "I realize there is so much I need to learn about novel writing," she said during our last interview of the year. "When I'm writing characters, when I'm writing different genres, I need to learn that no two genres are alike" (27 April 2011). In order to improve and get the feedback she needs on her novel, at the end of the semester Nikki created an account on authonomy.com, a web site where

authors can share their writing with each other and help each other work toward getting published. Nikki posted her incomplete manuscript on the site seeking feedback. She believes this is a good step toward finding the discourse community of fiction writers she needs to be involved with.

While Nikki's level of authority in her novel writing and her fan fiction writing lead to extensive discussions during our meetings, when we change the subject to how she has developed authority as a writer in her Advanced Expository Writing class, she indicates that she never grasped the purpose of the course and did not "figure out what the teacher wanted." On her essay assignments, she received lower grades than she had anticipated and she ended up revising her ignorance/enlightenment essay at the end of the semester for a better grade. For Nikki, this first semester at UCF was not long enough for her to develop authority in a new writing classroom. In reflecting on her experience, she speculates about why she was not able to develop more as a writer in Advanced Expository Writing: "I realize that everything is not cookie cutter anymore. And every professor is different. They don't all have the same idea of what writing should be" (27 April 2011). Nikki's self-perception as someone who can "write her way out of a paper bag" changes by the end of the semester. While she still feels she is a good writer, she recognizes that what constitutes good writing is different for each class and each discourse community. Her fan fiction discourse community, she believes, is where she commands the most authority. Her authority as a novelist is not measurable because she has nothing to measure it by—no discourse community where she can receive feedback on her writing. And she knows she may not ever be able to develop authority in her

school writing because each writing classroom and each teacher has different conceptions of good writing. Moving forward, Nikki develops a plan for how she will approach writing classrooms in the future: "I'm going to adapt and improvise. I'm going to try to figure out what the professor wants right at the start" (27 April 2011).

Discussion: The Impact of Simultaneous Participation on Nikki's Identity as a Writer

As she entered her first semester at UCF, Nikki felt confident that she would be able to write well in most of her classes. Her perceived identity as a good writer in general, however, changed as she grappled with the demands of writing across multiple school and non-school contexts. Like Jack, Nikki ran into some conflicts and also experienced some synergies between her school and non-school writing over the course of the spring 2011 semester.

The Conflicts

It did not take long for Nikki to realize that her previous practice of "BSing" her school writing was not going to work to her advantage in Advanced Expository Writing. In addition, her lengthy, ornate style of writing she practiced in her fan fiction stories and her novel could not always be repurposed in her school essay assignments: "I definitely have to learn to doubt myself with every single thing I do. I learned a lot in Advanced Expository about using clichés, or being too wordy, and those aren't really things I've thought about before" (27 April 2011). One conflict between Nikki's school and non-

97

school writing, therefore, is that some of the conventions she has used in her non-school writing—being detailed and occasionally using clichés—are not acceptable in her school writing. Another conflict between her school and non-school writing is that her practice of envisioning her fiction writing as a movie in her head, she finds, cannot always be repurposed in her school writing. When she works on her fan fiction and her novel, she has the freedom to create her characters, settings and plots exactly as she imagines them. She has the ability to focus on content. Yet in school, what is at the top of her mind is not the content of her essays, rather the correct form the professor wants. She describes what she believes the professor wanted in Advanced Expository Writing: "Follows the grammar rules. Stays on topic. Gets the point across. Well-cited. Not too wordy. Gets descriptive without trying to BS the whole thing. But it attracts the reader's interest and gets the point of view across" (23 Feb. 2011). Nikki felt very constrained by these conventions of school writing:

> I think class is much more formal. I'm allowed to use my voice when I'm writing
> fan fiction, or the voice of the characters…When you're writing for Advanced
> Expository, there are certain parameters that you can't go outside of. And it's not
> as much fun not to have the creative freedom (16 Feb. 2011).

The pedagogy in Nikki's Advanced Expository Writing class confines students to focusing mostly on form and places very little emphasis on the meaning and purpose of writing. While Nikki is aware that she must adjust her writing practices to meet the requirements of the writing classroom, I do not mean to imply that the conflicts she experiences are completely negative. As Paré has claimed, entering a new community

requires one to take on a new writing identity (64). Inevitably, students like Nikki who enter the writing classroom with strong identities as writers will feel conflicted between their academic and nonacademic lives. At the same time, they may begin to make connections between the two worlds, which should highlight the ongoing need for more in-depth exploration of how multiple literacies not only conflict, but also converge, support and shape each other.

The Synergies

Nikki's conceptions of good writing in her non-school discourse communities and in her writing classroom differ significantly. However, there were some subtle synergies that appeared to emerge between her writing classroom texts and non-school genres. First, when Nikki was given the freedom to choose her own topic for the ignorance/enlightenment essay in Advanced Expository Writing, she became more motivated to write than she had been for the previous essay assignment on Cicero and the No Child Left Behind Act. As explained earlier, Nikki believed that she was an expert on the topic of Professor Snape from the Harry Potter series and Itachi from the Naruto anime series. Having a good knowledge of the subject matter she chose to write about, she felt confident going into the assignment. Her familiarity with these characters inspired her to write and relate the characters' stories to the essay prompt. While she found the assignment more challenging than she initially expected, what is most

noteworthy, I believe, is that she applied knowledge from her non-school literate activities to a school writing assignment.

<center>Conclusion</center>

In Roozen's, "Fan-Ficing English Studies," he follows a student, who, similarly to Nikki, writes fan fiction and repurposes practices from the fan fiction world in her English class. This study, Roozen posits, should encourage us to consider:

> …how we might trace even more fully the rich varieties of experiences with reading and writing that are mediating literate action, how, in other words, we might more fully address empirically, theoretically, and methodologically, the sociohistoric and semiotic pathways that deposit elements of various literate thens and theres into literate activities here and now (164).

The argument here is particularly relevant to the case study of Nikki. As a highly motivated creative writer, Nikki strives to write well across multiple discourse communities and her writing classroom context. There are some clear conflicts and synergies between her school and non-school writing practices. Nikki's developing identity as a writer in the spring 2011 semester is shaped by her self-perception as a writer, the various writing processes she uses across multiple genres, and her level of authority in each context she writes within.

Participating in multiple discourse communities is nothing new for Nikki. Dating back to her youth, she has always engaged in storytelling and other literate activities. Yet

<center>100</center>

by analyzing her experiences during her first semester at UCF, I come to realize that she is indeed doing what Bartholomae refers to as "inventing the university" (624). Nikki, a student with a very strong self-perception of herself as a good writer, grapples with her confidence and ability to write multiple genres and the new requirements of her Advanced Expository Writing classroom. She enters the university with confidence as a writer who can write anything, but by the end of the first semester, her self-perception changes. She must adapt to each new classroom and non-school context as she enters it, arriving at the realization that there is no such thing as a good writer in general.

Nikki's recursive writing processes are central to her identity as a writer, yet the extent to which she revises her novel is much greater than that of her writing class essays. In her non-school writing, Nikki rewrites to produce content she is genuinely satisfied with. But in school, she aims only to impress the teacher and focuses on what McCarthy calls the "concrete" aspects of language; the MLA format, grammar and mechanics. Still, Nikki attempts to repurpose some of her writing processes (envisioning her characters for the ignorance/enlightenment essay, for instance), and this benefits her personally, as she enjoys the assignment more than others. The consequence of this, however, is that she loses sight of the assignment's purpose and what the teacher wants. In other words, she wants her process and style to be useful across multiple contexts, but feels constrained when she tries to make this happen.

Because Nikki was not able to fully grasp what her Advanced Expository Writing teacher was looking for in her essays until the end of the semester, she does not develop authority as a writer in this class. This supports the writing studies literature that

demonstrates how difficult gaining authority can be. On the other hand, Johns' theory that students must "sacrifice" aspects of their non-school discourse communities to gain authority in the writing classroom does not necessarily explain Nikki's case. On the surface level of Nikki's experience, she does diminish the amount of time over the semester that she spends on her fan fiction and novel writing. But this does not necessarily mean her level of authority in either discourse community is diminished; perhaps it means that Nikki simply values success in school over personal enjoyment in this case. Writing across multiple contexts may not change the level of authority Nikki develops in any of her school or non-school writing in such a short time period. It does, however, change how she believes she must approach new writing situations in order to succeed. Nikki would like to repurpose her common non-school writing practices for her school writing, but she feels that what is more important is figuring out what the teacher wants. It seems crucial, therefore, that we continue to research what might be done to encourage students to embrace all aspects of their literate selves when they sit down to write an essay, without confining them to the rules and conventions of the writing classroom alone.

CHAPTER SIX: JEANNE

When I first spoke with Jeanne over the phone, I explained to her the ideal candidate for this study: a student who wrote not only for school, but also for multiple activities outside of school. Jeanne rattled off the non-school writing she has done recently, including poetry, journaling and correspondence on Facebook. Her current writing practices were interesting, but what piqued my interest even more was her past writing. Jeanne has more than 20 years of experience working in the advertising industry, writing radio commercials and designing print ads among other marketing materials. She never completed a formal college education, hence her decision to attend a community college later in life, she explained: "I just want a piece of paper that says I can do what I did" (24 Jan. 2011). As I grew to know Jeanne, she shared with me a deeper motivation for her return to college; after her husband passed away the previous March, she needed something to distract her mind. Jeanne jumped into her coursework full-force, taking five classes at Brevard Community College, one of them being a once-a-week Monday night section of ENC 1101. Jeanne's story is much different than Jack and Nikki's stories; While Jack and Nikki diminished their non-school writing practices to focus on their school writing, Jeanne dropped her non-school writing almost completely. This indicates that simultaneous participation across multiple discourse communities and school settings may sometimes consume student writers to the point that they cannot manage various writing contexts and genres at once.

An Overview of Jeanne as a Writer

Jeanne is a first-year community college student with an intriguing professional and creative literate background. It has been 20 years since she was active in the workforce, as she was the primary, full-time caregiver for her late husband during this timeframe. Entering college later in life as a non-traditional student brought about many cognitive and emotional challenges for Jeanne. Hans Schuetze and Maria Slowey in define the term non-traditional as "socially or educationally disadvantaged sections of the population, for example, those from working class backgrounds, particular ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and, in the past, frequently women" (312). They go on to say that non-traditional students may be "older students with a vocational training and work experience background, or other students with unconventional educational biographies" (313). It is important to note that Jeanne may not fit this definition exactly, and being "non-traditional" is just one aspect of her identity as a student writer.

Jeanne enters ENC 1101 with a vast array of current and past non-school writing practices. Her current practices include correspondence with two social groups on Facebook, private journaling (which she respectfully declined to share with me) and poetry. Her previous writing practices are entwined in what she indicated was a lucrative career in the advertising business. Jeanne's father operated a print shop in the Florida Keys, where she learned to write and design ads for print and broadcast media. Though she never attended college for an advertising degree, Jeanne has acquired a thorough knowledge about different genres of writing while on the job. Many returning adult or

non-traditional students such as Jeanne have been informally educated by their lived

experiences, as Jenny Cook-Gumperz explains:

> Adults have already had significant amounts of schooling experience, even if the
>
> significance of this experience lies in its disturbed and truncated character. They
>
> do not enter an educational encounter without prior knowledge and already
>
> developed attitudes to learning (342).

In her first semester of college, Jeanne's prior knowledge acquired as a

professional writer, a poet and a private journal keeper will both benefit and hinder her

performance in the writing classroom. She experiences many frustrations with her

assignments throughout the semester but remains adamant about earning the education

she has waited so long to pursue. Her goal, she says, is not only to receive that document

that acknowledges she "can do what she did" for many years as an advertising

professional, but also to eventually re-enter the workforce in a field that centers on

written communication, be it the advertising industry or something else of the kind.

Jeanne is a writer with vast experience, and the discourse communities of her past and

present have built her identity that will impact her writing practices as a student writer

today. These discourse communities are wide-ranging, from professional settings to self-

created online social groups.

<u>Keeping Connected: How Jeanne Writes on Facebook</u>

One of the non-school writing practices Jeanne enjoys most is corresponding with friends in two different groups on Facebook. One is a group of about 26 women who connected in a chat room on a different web site in the late 1990s, and the other is a group of classmates from Jeanne's high school in the Keys. The former group was formed out of a need for support and information for women going through menopause. When Jeanne began chatting online with women going through the same experience she had been at the time, she decided to keep in contact with the group year after year. They have developed long-lasting friendships Jeanne says: "Children have come and gone, spouses have come and gone, we've evolved and everything. I missed out once. They went to Vegas a couple of years ago and they actually met face to face. They've done this several times, but I couldn't go" (14 Feb. 2011). Because Jeanne has not had the time to meet this group face to face, keeping in touch with them online through written correspondence is important to her. So, she recently created a Facebook group where the women can share stories about anything from career to family to health issues. Jeanne explains the goal within this discourse community: "We cheer each other on, encourage each other. I can pop a note in at three in the morning and I know one of them will be right there and vice versa" (14 Feb. 2011).

The women's Facebook group, for Jeanne, started as a support system and has evolved into a network of women who communicate for various reasons. In Jeanne's

second Facebook discourse community, a group of about 100 former classmates reminisce about high school in the Keys:

> They remember me raising cane, trying out for cheerleading, they remember my purple suede hip hugger bellbottoms. The stuff we talk about is 'do you remember when?' or discussions about places (in the Keys) and teachers that have passed. We grew up there and it was a really unique experience (14 Feb. 2011).

Writing in her Facebook discourse communities, while the purpose may be quite different for each group, provides Jeanne with a tool to stay connected with longtime friends and former classmates. The writing between members of each of these communities is not given much preparation and does not go through a revision process. Structure, form, and grammar are not important in these group's online conversations. Jeanne's writing practices on Facebook are by and large for her enjoyment, which comes from interaction with others. But it is important to note that their function is not merely communicative. The writing Jeanne posts in her Facebook groups may be a representation of what Burgess and Ivanic refer to as the "autobiographical self," which is defined by "the sense of who a person is, which the writer brings to the act of writing, that is, the unique consequences for selfhood and all her experiences of life up to that moment with their associated interests, values, beliefs and social positioning" (238). They go on to say that these aspects of a self "are all potentially significant for the discoursal construction of identity through writing" (239). I come to the realization over the course of the spring 2011 semester that Jeanne is compelled to incorporate her life experiences and her

perspectives into her writing. She does this not only in her conversations on Facebook with friends, but also in her private writing.

Jeanne's Private Writing: "I have to feel something for it"

During our preliminary interview, I asked Jeanne what kind of writing she prefers most: "I have to feel something for it…The things I've written, they're not all that fabulous, but they're my soul" (24 Jan. 2011). Jeanne is an emotionally open person. Throughout the semester, she shared several poignant stories of her husband's health struggles and she asked me not to include certain details in this written report, as they are too personal. Still, Jeanne never hesitated to steer our discussions toward topics based on her personal experiences, and she writes about these experiences in her private journal and poems. Her poetry has had an ongoing influence on Jeanne's identity as a writer, as she started writing it as a teenager in the 1970s. In Figure 4, a copy of two poems she wrote at the beginning of the spring 2011 semester, it is apparent how strong of a personal connection Jeanne has to her words.

Comfort came one day and crept
behind me wherever I went.
He stayed his distance and spoke not a word
To let on of his intent.

The days were hard, the nights so bleak
I wept and cried out loud.
Yet never did he reach for me –
or hide me in his shroud.

Then came the day Serenity
    became my only goal.
And Comfort – He,
    enveloped me.
And wrapped me in His soul.

Take me with you where you're going.
Whether close or near or far.
Let the winds that blow through land us
up through every single star.

For I know what's here and now for me.
    And I've already seen life through.
Take me with you where you're going, Please.
    I want to be with you.

Figure 4: Jeanne's Most Recent Poetry

109

In addition to her journaling and poetry, Jeanne also shared with me halfway through the semester than she is currently working on what she hopes one day will become a book about the extreme difficulties she experienced while searching for adequate health insurance coverage and medication for her husband, who was an organ transplant patient. If her writing ever gets published, she says she hopes it will help others facing similar health ordeals. At one point I asked Jeanne if she felt that writing about her experiences was therapeutic as she grieved: "Oh yes, because I really can't talk about it," she responded (2 March 2011). Though Jeanne did not want any of her private writing, aside from her poetry, to be published in this report, the fact that she is most interested in writing based on her personal experiences is significant to her developing identity as a student writer in the spring 2011 semester. The literature on student writing based on life experience suggests that the writing about real life may be beneficial to a student's literate development: "The telling of a life story is therefore not just a straightforward recounting of temporally ordered happenings, but the construction of a personal identity in which tellers must assess themselves, reflexively, as persons whose lives are worthy of telling" (Cook-Gumperz 343). Indeed, Jeanne's life is worthy of telling, and she tells her story by communicating on Facebook, writing poetry and keeping a journal. And there is yet another aspect of Jeanne's literate identity that she brings to the college writing classroom: her experience as a professional writer for mass media.

<u>Looking Back: Jeanne Reflects on Writing in the Advertising Business</u>

Many aspects of Jeanne's literate practices and discourse communities that I have discussed may all play important roles in her identity as a writer and the history she brings with her to different public and private writing contexts. An important component of Jeanne's literate identity that I now turn to is rooted in life experiences that she has not reflected on in depth for more than 20 years. Jeanne's longtime career in the advertising industry has a tremendous influence, I believe, on her conceptions of writing today. Her work in this business grew out of her early experiences as a 15-year-old who helped her father run his multi-service print shop in the Keys: "I would kind of hold down the fort. I used to go there originally after school, and then I decided to quit school and work there full time" (7 March 2011). Jeanne went on to explain her many responsibilities at the shop:

> I guess it was kind of eclectic. I mean it really was. Over the course of a day I would do an eight-page menu (for a local restaurant), and set up photo shoots for, you know, a magazine cover, and then turn around and write a jingle. And then if the pressman didn't show up, I ran the press (7 March 2011).

Here, in Jeanne's recollection of her duties, it is important to note that the practice of compositing multiple texts simultaneously is nothing new to her. Her history is full with various literate engagements that are crucial to her identity as a writer.

Jeanne eventually left her father's shop to pursue work at local radio stations. Writing radio commercials, she found, was her forte. One of her most memorable

commercials, she recalls, was for a florist shop. She was particularly proud of the ad's tag line, "We're the best in the blooming business." Jeanne explains her writing process for this ad: "It was something that just came to me" (7 March 2011). During our discussion of Jeanne's radio work, I asked if she could detail how a jingle came to be, from start to finish. She recalled it rather vividly:

> I would have a very extensive conversation with the client. Because image is everything, whether it be in writing or whatever. Image is everything. And I needed to know, did they want to be real friendly and casual? Did they want to be more formal? What exactly were they trying to promote? That was critical…From a radio standpoint, anything that was going to be vocalized, I had to find out what the tone was going to be. If it was print media, I needed to know the tone in a different way (7 March 2011).

The process Jeanne describes here was not acquired in a classroom, rather from on-the-job experience. For decades she had been immersed in a discourse community that allowed her to develop her writing skills in several genres of mass media writing. Many student writers, such as Roozen's study participant Angela, are able to incorporate their long-held non-school writing practices into their school assignments:

> Rather than abandoning the rich constellation of practices that informed her private writing, Angelica threaded them into the writing tasks she encountered at critical moments during her journey through the university and her foray into the workplace (From Journals to Journalism 565).

Admittedly, I hoped Jeanne would be able to do something similar. I hoped that Jeanne would, despite such a long gap since she last practiced her genres of professional writing, somehow be able to apply this experience in her writing classroom and that her decades of knowledge acquired from working in advertising would ultimately benefit her as an ENC 1101 student. Reflecting on her professional writing practices was not a problem; it was the conceptions of writing in ENC 1101 that greatly conflicted with her conceptions of writing she had acquired in her non-school discourse communities over her lifetime.

Writing in ENC 1101: Re-learning the Rules and Definitions

A few weeks into the semester, Jeanne vents to me about her writing class:
I've been going through *A Writer's Reference* (the course's required text) and it is nouns, verbs, participles. As you know, I used to write radio commercials, and I've done stories, I've done copywriting, I've done proofreading. It's frustrating because I don't know the rules, I just know how it is. That's the way it's done. To put a definition on it just throws me (31 Jan. 2011).

In the first few weeks of class that I observed, lessons emphasized on grammar review and parts of a sentence. The teacher, a full-time instructor at the college who brings high energy and enthusiasm to her classroom, frequently starts class by playing School House Rock videos, such as "Conjunction Junction." During one class period, the students participate in a game called "Comma Jeopardy," and throughout the semester, the teacher holds impromptu spelling bees in which she walks around the classroom

asking each student to spell a commonly misspelled word (the words are listed in *A Writer's Reference*). In addition to engaging students with entertaining activities, the teacher also focuses a great deal of class time on teaching MLA format. Review of how to cite sources, build a works cited page and correctly set up margins and spacing in Microsoft Word are central to these discussions. There are several language rules students must learn and follow in class, including avoidance of passive voice, always including a thesis statement in the last sentence of the first paragraph, and perhaps what is emphasized most, always writing objectively in the third person. "Academic writing is third person," the instructor explains during one class meeting. Learning how to write academically, for college in general, was a major focus in this section of ENC 1101.

There are two main kinds of writing done in Jeanne's writing classroom: drafts and revisions of students' own essays and peer editing. A supplementary practice in this class is writing as a group. One assignment, for example, required students to write a group poem about a grammatical feature of language. Another required students to develop a game about grammar and write an essay about it together in small groups. Essays and peer review reports are the assignments Jeanne appears to have the most difficulty composing. As she writes her own essays, Jeanne focuses mainly on being correct in form and meeting the teacher's expectations. She says she feels limited by the rules the teacher has put in place and somewhat intimidated by certain statements the teacher makes about the objectives of the class, such as "This isn't a creative writing class; this is English" (7 Feb. 2011). Jeanne and I had a conversation about what the teacher may have meant by the above statement:

Jeanne:	Don't elaborate, get to the point.
Autumn:	What do you think she sees as good writing?
J:	Her way.
A:	Her way?
J:	She's more focused on the definitions. I used to do proofreading, so I can scan down and see where the text has changed. I don't know what the terminology for that is, but I know it's wrong. I can correct it. She is more focused on me knowing the terminology of why it's done that way. I don't know why it's done that way. It's instinctive with me. I'm on autopilot. I think, OK, this is it…I can't write the way she wants me to write when I'm so focused on the definitions (2 March 2011).

Formatting issues, from sentence structure to correct usage of spacing and fonts in Microsoft Word, are extremely frustrating for Jeanne. In a course that places a great emphasis on what Gee calls "the superficial features of language," Jeanne encounters conflicts with her long-held beliefs about what writing should be. Gee explains the issues surrounding a focus on mechanics and correctness, not only in composition classes, but in society in general:

Unfortunately, many middle-class mainstream status-giving Discourses often do stress superficial features of language. Why? Precisely because such superficial features are the best test as to whether one was apprenticed in the "right" place at the "right" time with the "right" people. Such superficial features are exactly the

parts of Discourses most impervious to overt instruction and are only fully

mastered when everything else in the Discourse is mastered (11).

Despite the knowledge Jeanne was acquiring about the surface features of language at

this point in time, when I asked her what she perceived as good writing, she responded in

terms of writing's content rather than its form. She says good writing is writing that

provides a "visual" of what is happening. When I asked her if academic writing could

provide a visual, she responded, "I think it can, in my case, if I don't have to focus so

much on 'Is this a prepositional phrase? Is this the time to analyze it?' It's stopping me

from writing" (2 March 2011).

Jeanne's struggle with learning to format correctly became so problematic that

she was late to class one evening (and missed our pre-class interview we had scheduled)

because she could not figure out how to change the font in the header of her paper from

Calibri to Times New Roman. Shortly after her midterms, she had become so frustrated

with the class that she considers dropping it from her schedule entirely. After receiving a

startling email from her about her intentions to drop the class, I encouraged her not to.

Her response indicated that the class was not the issue; rather she was experiencing a

tremendous amount of stress in general:

> Thank you for your moral support :) I know I took on more than I should have
>
> and rules and details do not come as easily as they might have a few years ago.
>
> However, I received an email from (the teacher) indicating she had not graded
>
> some of my assignments, with the latest assignment resulting in an 'A.' So I will
>
> try to continue to hang in there (1 March 2011).

It is clear that Jeanne grapples with the demands of her own responsibilities in ENC 1101, but perhaps a task she finds to be equally as daunting is peer editing. During many of the class meetings throughout the semester, students exchange drafts of their papers and must check off items on a peer editing checklist, which addresses many mechanical requirements of the paper, including its thesis statement, grammar and MLA format. During one of the first peer editing sessions of the semester, I observed Jeanne and her classmates in the process of editing each other's papers. There is no conversation whatsoever as the students mark up papers and fill in blanks on their peer editing checklists. When they are finished, they trade papers and some students comment verbally to their peers on what they wrote. Others switch papers and immediately head back to their seats. Jeanne, after contemplating a feature of her peer's paper for several minutes, whispers a question to me in the silent classroom: "What's the correct symbol for smaller spacing?" The focus on form in this ENC 1101 classroom appears to be surfacing in both the students' writing and their peer editing sessions. Correctness and form is so important in peer editing in this class that the students are graded based on how well they correct their peers' errors. The teacher explains this rule prior to one of the peer editing sessions: "If the peer does not catch this, the peer will lose points" (31 Jan. 2011). In our final interview session of the semester, Jeanne reflects on what the peer editing process was like for her. We talked specifically about one paper Jeanne had felt uncomfortable editing:

> Jeanne: It wasn't MLA formatted. It's wasn't indented, it was just like all
>   over the place. And I was following the thread and it was

interesting, you know, her thesis. The way she wrote it was actually well-worded. But because she didn't follow the rules, I tried to be kinder to her than it ended up being…and she called it a pity grade last night, and it really wasn't.

Autumn: Your peer called it a pity grade?

J: No, no, the instructor.

A: She called what you wrote in your peer review a pity grade?

J: A pity grade, and I said no, because I really enjoyed the paper. I really did think that person wrote it to the best of her ability. Now, she's not going to go on to become the next great American writer, but she knew her topic well.

A: What was the topic?

J: Obsessive compulsive disorder. And I remember some things in there that were fascinating. Some of the phrases just didn't flow, for continuity. But she didn't misspell anything, her grammar was fine, you know? But there were some things that I let go. She was trying to get a good grade.

A: So as you were reading her paper, were you actively looking for formatting issues? MLA and grammar?

J: I was doing what I was told to do. Yeah. By doing that, it detracted from the purpose of the paper.

McCarthy has pointed out that a "domination of the concrete may often characterize newcomers' first steps as they attempt to use language in unfamiliar disciplines" (139). While the emphasis on the concrete in ENC 1101 appears to constrain Jeanne in her writing and peer editing, there are at least some activities over the course of the semester in which she does not feel constrained by the classroom conventions. These included primarily two group assignments: a cutesy poem about italicizing and a group essay about a punctuation mark board game that the group has created. The poem, entitled "If You're Wise…Italicize" (See Figure 5), allows Jeanne to write creatively without constantly thinking about MLA format or grammar. When the group presented the poem in class, both the teacher and the students offered a round of applause and praise of the poem.

If you're Wise...Italicize

If you want to emphasize, you might need to *italicize*.

Books and Films and Poems that rant

All prefer their fonts to slant.

From Websites to Choreography ... Ships, and Plays-What's on TV;

Radio Programs and Magazines;

All require their names to lean.

Spacecraft and Aircraft and Electronic Games; From Comic Strips to *Purple Rain*

Visual Art like *The Mona Lisa*...

Your words better tilt like the Tower of Pisa.

The End.

Figure 5: Jeanne's Group Poem

In the group's essay about their punctuation mark game, "What Am I?", the writing is a simple 1 ½-page description of a game they created accompanied with instructions on how to play it. There are no in-text citations or quotes in the group essay that accompanies the game assignment, nor is a works cited page required, although the paper is spaced and indented according to MLA format. Jeanne's group does not use the third person voice in the game essay as they are instructed to do with their major essay assignments for the course. They also inject some sarcasm into the concluding sentence: "Caution: if you are not very careful, you might leave this game knowing what an ellipses mark is and how to properly use parenthesis, brackets and the slash."

Unlike Jeanne's major essay assignments and peer editing tasks, the less-formal, supplementary group assignments in the course offer Jeanne the opportunity to write more freely, she believes. She is not accustomed to the rules of MLA and grammar that she must acquire in ENC 1101, yet she still feels that she is a good writer in many ways. Jeanne enjoys writing, and this is apparent in the poem on italicizing that she writes for the group assignment. It is how Jeanne views herself as a writer that greatly conflicts with her experience in ENC 1101. Jeanne will discover that succeeding in this class requires her to step outside of her self-perception as a good writer in general and reconsider herself as what her instructor would like her to be: an "academic" writer.

Jeanne's Self-perceptions as a Writer

On several occasions throughout the semester, Jeanne explains her frustrations with ENC 1101 by reiterating that she has a 140 IQ. This indicates that she believes her IQ is a measurement of her ability to write. Jeanne's self-perception as a writer is very strong, and as I come to learn more about her life, career and literate background, the clearer it becomes how all of these factors of her identity influence the way she views herself as a writer. She believes she is a smart person with a high IQ. This belief is indicative of two factors that seem to be central to Jeanne's literate self: One, she perceives writing as something that comes naturally to her and two, she is an eloquent conversationalist, which, to her, translates to being a good writer.

As mentioned previously, Jeanne believes she knows the "rules" of writing but does not always know how to label or define the rules. She feels that her abilities as a writer developed naturally from her years of professional experience. Given that Jeanne has not worked in several years, I asked if she thought she had lost some of the skills she had acquired previously. Her response did not surprise me, given her apparent confidence in herself as a writer: "I really feel that if you have a good foundation, it's like riding a bicycle to me…I think the fundamentals, anybody can learn them. Whether anybody will or cares to, that's a whole different conversation" (5 April 2011). Despite her lack of formal education and her gap in writing-related professional work, Jeanne believes she still knows the "fundamentals." Yet she struggles to describe what the fundamentals are:

Jeanne: Good command of the English language.

Autumn:	What do you mean by that? Grammar? Vocabulary? Structure?

J:	I think all of it plays a part.

Jeanne perceives herself not only as a writer who knows a lot about language, but also as a writer who can use a universal set of writing skills in many different writing situations: "There is a premise I learned from my father. When I was 16 years old, he said that I should always write, whether I was writing an ad or a letter, that I should write in such a way that I would appeal to the person of average intelligence without insulting anybody" (5 April 2011). Jeanne goes on to explain that she sometimes feels this practice of addressing the person with "average intelligence" constrains her natural writing abilities:

> Every once in a while I have to take a step backwards because I love language. I love twisting a phrase. I love sarcasm as you've discovered. I do. I love it. I love a well-termed phrase. I just want to stand up and applaud people who come up with them. With that being said, I have to pull myself in because I'll get caught up in the moment. If there's a table of people and there's two or three of us that are not on the same page, I will reign myself in so we're all included. So everyone is included in the conversation. And so that can translate well into writing, I would think (5 April 2011).

In further comparing writing to a verbal conversation, Jeanne reflects on the writing she did for many years at her father's print shop and the radio stations: "I wrote body copy for things when I was younger, and so it translated to radio. And to me, it was a natural transition. Instead of writing about it, I just spoke it…I have a very conversational way of writing" (5 April 2011).

Jeanne's self-perception as a natural writer who can transition between multiple writing tasks and employ her conversational style in multiple genres served her well in her professional life decades ago. When she enters college, however, she finds that her self-perception as a good writer in general does not necessarily align with the conception of good writers in her college writing classroom. Courage's study participant, Ethel, encountered similar circumstances: "In learning academic literacy, she was forced to struggle against rather than build on the literacy she brought to the classroom" (488). Writing students, the literature has shown, deal with the demands of balancing their academic and non-academic lives in different ways. All three students in my study experienced conflicts between their school and non-school writing practices. Jeanne's case, though, is particularly significant to research on student multimembership. In order for her to succeed in her school setting, she had to drop her non-school writing—her journaling, poetry and Facebook posts—almost entirely.

How Jeanne Alters Her Process and Style Across Genres

The first semester of college may be a difficult transition for any student, but entering college later in life as Jeanne did presents a unique set of challenges. As Jeanne adjusts to her new schedule and balancing multiple assignments for five classes, she is still grieving the loss of her husband, and for obvious reasons this distracts her from her school and non-school writing. Jeanne shares with me toward the end of the semester that she is experiencing problems juggling her responsibilities and that she struggles to

complete homework assignments on time: "I bit off more than I should have. I dove in because I needed something mental and to get off my mind what was going through my head. And I'm still going through it" (5 April 2011). As the semester goes on, Jeanne ends up spending less and less time in her Faceboook groups and writing in her personal journal and her poetry book as she tries to keep up with the demands of her courses. She writes across multiple school and non-school genres simultaneously only for a short time and eventually turns most of her attention toward school writing. Her values are then placed on succeeding at her first semester in school.

While Jeanne does not engage in multiple writing processes to the extent that the other students in this study do over the course of the semester, it still appears that she is attempting to repurpose some aspects of her previous non-school writing practices into her new school writing practices. This is evident by the fact that the content of Jeanne's school writing has also served as content in her non-school journaling and poetry. The topics she chooses for her ENC 1101 essays, including prejudices that exist in the U.S. healthcare system, the importance of being an organ donor and her mid-term paper, an essay that compared what life is like in two different cities, are all rooted in her lived experiences with her late husband. Jeanne finds that writing from personal experience, though it must be written in third person in ENC 1101, comes easiest to her: "See, I've always written about what I know. And one of the things that most people are encouraged to do is write what you know" (5 April 2011). Because Jeanne's ENC 1101 teacher does not permit students to write essays in the first or second person, writing based on previously acquired knowledge is very difficult for Jeanne. In her final paper, for

example, she wanted to build an argument for why immigrants to the U.S. should all be required to learn the English language. Jeanne's argument stems from her Swedish ancestors, who she says all learned to speak and write English when they immigrated to the U.S.: "I think if I went to another country, they're not going to change their language and culture and everything to accommodate me. I guess that's my frustration. I know it's a touchy subject, but I can't do it because it's got to be in third person" (5 April 2011).

Because Jeanne desires to write about topics that she feels she knows well using a process and style she is familiar with, her greatest challenge is excluding her own voice—a voice that she has always included in her personal and professional writing— from the school assignment. In theorizing about how students join the conversation in college composition, Penrose and Geisler explain how their study participant, Janet, "saw no role for herself" in her freshman writing course. Contrastingly, Jeanne did see a role for herself but felt she was unable to play the role. The emphasis on producing objective writing in third person voice in ENC 1101 appeared to constrain Jeanne to writing papers she felt lukewarm about. Her immense concentration on following the rules of the classroom limited her development as a writer.

<u>Jeanne's Identity and Authority as a Writer</u>

Like Jack and Nikki, Jeanne has great confidence in herself as a writer. For years, she leveraged her literate abilities to develop successful ad campaigns for her clients. Her greatest perceived strength as a writer stems from the writing she has done on the job.

Since she left her career, however, Jeanne has not had the chance to continue growing as a writer in the genres she had practiced so often before. This semester she clearly did not have the opportunity, therefore, to further develop her authority as a writer in her previous discourse communities. She may perceive herself as an authority on what she calls "the fundamentals" of writing, yet she is confounded by the lessons on grammar and mechanics she must learn in ENC 1101: "The rules have changed since I was in school," she said during one of the first class meetings, which started with a grammar review session.

By the end of the semester, Jeanne feels that what she learned most from ENC 1101 is how to use MLA format correctly. While knowledge of MLA style will indeed be useful to Jeanne in future courses, it will not help her learn to write for all academic contexts. It can be argued that because the classroom is not a discourse community, and because it does not follow writing processes defined by a group or share a common goal, Jeanne not is able to develop authority as a writer in ENC 1101. Additionally, because Jeanne's coursework takes up most of her time over the semester and diminishes the amount of non-school writing she produces, and because her non-school writing is largely private, she does not develop authority as a writer in any of her non-school genres during this time.

This is not to say that Jeanne does not have the potential to develop authority as a writer within different school and non-school contexts in the future. Her problem was rooted in the rigid rules of her composition classroom. Provided the appropriate context and time frame, she may indeed be able to acquire additional knowledge about the genres

she is most interested in, such as copywriting or poetry. In the spring 2011 semester, Jeanne had no choice but to put aside her non-school genres altogether in order to pass her classes, whereas Jack and Nikki, slightly more experienced college students who went into the semester having a better idea of what kind of time commitments to expect, only had to diminish time spent on their non-school genres. Time constraints, in sum, are central to Jeanne's inability to develop authority as a writer over the course of the spring 2011 semester. Over a longer timeframe, Jeanne may be able to further develop her identity and authority as a writer as she enters new classrooms and discourse communities in the future. Just because Jeanne appeared to be unable to command authority as an "academic" writer in ENC 1101 and did not repurpose many writing practices from the past and present does not mean she will not be empowered to do so in other contexts. As Burgess and Ivanic have argued, the features of writing from a writer's past can indeed resurface in future texts: "Due to their capacity to endure over time, written texts (including acts of writing and reading) that occur at different points in time…writers also coordinate processes (of identification) that unfold over multiple timescales" (234). They go on to say, and I agree particularly in regards to Jeanne's identity and authority as a writer, that identity construction does not occur in "discrete, isolatable 'moments' but rather as a continuous process in which any given 'moment' is temporally extended by its integration with other processes to include the past and future" (234).

Discussion: The Impact of Jeanne's Multiple Literacies on her Identity as a Writer

Jeanne's case differs from the other two students in this study in several ways. Mainly, she is a non-traditional student returning to college later in life whereas Jack and Nikki are in their 20s. She is also the only of the three students in the study who almost completely sacrifices her non-school writing practices during the semester so she can succeed at her school writing. Because of these differences, it would not be appropriate to say that Jeanne made connections between her *simultaneous* school and non-school writing practices. However, the writing Jeanne has produced within various discourse communities over the course of her lifetime—from the radio jingles she wrote in the Keys to her poetry—most definitely played a role in the conflicts and synergies that exist between her multiple literacies.

The Conflicts

Jeanne's greatest qualms with ENC 1101 almost always tied to the language rules that she felt she knew well, but could not define. In "Rigid Rules" Rose examines students who experience writer's block and posits that "the five students who experienced blocking we all operating either with writing rules or with planning strategies that either impeded of enhanced the composing process" (390). In Jeanne's case, the rules were extremely disruptive to the writing process. She has not learned any rules of language in a college writing classroom previous to the spring 2011 semester; the conventions of the genres she has learned were acquired at the print shop and the radio stations. In other

words, she acquired knowledge about writing specific genres as an active participant in her non-school discourse communities. The knowledge about writing that she is attempting to acquire in a classroom setting is not familiar to Jeanne, nor does this knowledge align with her previously held conceptions of good writing.

In addition to Jeanne's issues with the rules in ENC 1101, her belief that writing should be personally meaningful conflicted with the course's focus on rigid "academic" format. This was apparent not only in the essays Jeanne wrote, but also when she provided feedback on her classmates' writing during peer editing sessions. Jeanne describes her peer's paper on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and the conflicted feelings she experienced while editing it:

> You know you locked the door, but you go back downstairs and check it again. Or washing your hands over and over again. There were a couple of really interesting examples, and in the course of reading it, I was like wow, you know? And the gems she came up with, to me, are far outweighed by the fact that she might have missed an indent. But that was the criteria, so I had to grade down a little bit, and that was tragic (5 April 2011).

Jeanne, who wanted to evaluate her classmate on both the content *and* the form of the essay, felt confined by the instructions to grade solely for form. Ironically, it is Jeanne's attention to content and meaning in writing that also benefits her school writing in some ways.

The Synergies

While Jeanne did not consistently write across multiple school and non-school genres over the course of the semester as Jack and Nikki did, there was sufficient evidence from this case study that Jeanne retooled some of her long-practiced non-school writing in ENC 1101. Firstly, she took the lead in a group assignment that required composing a poem. "If You're Wise…Italicize" was well-liked among the teacher and students. Secondly, Jeanne took the common conception of "write what you know" to lay the foundations for all of her essay assignments. Jeanne felt comfortable addressing topics she was familiar with, such as organ transplantation. She describes her process of conducting research for this paper:

> I needed to cite five references. I went to the United Network of Organ Sharing, TRIO, another one I'm still a member of; Transplant Recipients International Organization, I went to NIH, then I went to UNMC Transplant Center, which is the University of Nebraska Medical Center. So there's a lot out there, and it was a lot easier for me to do that paper (7 March 2011).

In the same way Nikki felt comfortable writing about the fictional characters she enjoyed, Jeanne felt comfortable with choosing essay topics she had extensive real-life experience with. Cook-Gumperz and others, as I mentioned previously, have claimed that the value of writing about life experiences is not limited to a recollection of events. By writing about subjects she knew well in ENC 1101, Jeanne was able to analyze her experiences

131

from a different perspective, in a different setting. This familiarity of subject matter and telling of a life in student writing most certainly needs further research.

<center>Conclusion</center>

How did Jeanne's multiple writing practices impact her identity as a writer? Jeanne was, perhaps, the most professionally seasoned writer in her class but also the student with the greatest time gap since her last formal education experience, and she brought an already complex literate identity to ENC 1101. As I have shown, this complexity influenced her role and performance in the classroom in positive and negative ways. Additionally, Jeanne's experience in the writing classroom influenced her overall identity as a writer by prompting her to question the conceptions of writing that she had held for so long. The three aspects of identity central to the research questions in this study—self-perceptions, writing processes and levels of authority—all played roles in how Jeanne negotiated her writing practices during one semester.

The literature on student writer's self-perceptions largely claims that the way students view themselves as writers will impact how they actually write in any context. Jeanne perceived herself as a good writer entering college; she had, after all, written professionally for many years. Yet when the "rules" of "academic" writing were presented to her, she did not understand how she could, or why she should adjust her conceptions of good writing. Learning the rules was, as Courage suggested of many student writers, an "alien activity" for Jeanne because she thought she had already

<center>132</center>

acquired the rules from her professional discourse communities. Yet when she was asked to demonstrate her knowledge of the rules, she struggled.

Perhaps an even greater struggle Jeanne encountered was with balancing multiple literate practices at once. As Johns has claimed, many students often sacrifice their non-school discourse communities in order to gain membership into the writing classroom (65). Jeanne did not continue simultaneously practicing school and non-school writing as Jack and Nikki did because the balance became too much work for her to handle at once. There were, however, some traces of evidence that she repurposed some of her previous non-school processes and styles in her school writing. She appeared to retool her practice of composing poetry and radio jingles, for example, when she was tasked with writing a poem about italicization for her writing class.

Because Jeanne did not actually write across multiple discourse communities while simultaneously enrolled in ENC 1101, it is not fair to ask the research question of whether or not her multimembership influenced her authority as a writer. Authority may not even be the appropriate framing lens for viewing Jeanne's experience at all. However, it is important to note that she did not appear to develop authority as a writer over the course of the semester. This is not necessarily a negative consequence of her experience, rather a mere side effect of a returning adult college student juggling a heavy course load in her first semester. Jeanne may not have acquired the writing-related knowledge she was hoping for in ENC 1101, but that is not necessarily a negative outcome. Nor does it mean she will not be able to acquire writing-related knowledge in future contexts, as Burgess and Ivanic have indicated. Her literate activities from the past and present are all

equally critical to how she will approach writing in each new discourse community and classroom she enters. And her extensive experience with various genres of writing that she brought to the writing classroom, I argue, underscores the need to explore such matters of writer identities in future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When I started this project, I did not expect to find such interesting student participants. Because my subjects we all deeply concerned with writing, each of them in a different way, the study yielded intriguing insights into the literate worlds of student writers. The students' participation in various discourse communities and writing classes during the time I followed them, as expected, changed their identities as writers in profound ways. Their experiences prompted them to question their abilities as writers, to use their knowledge about writing to cross academic/non-academic boundaries, and to ponder how they might be able to improve as writers both inside and outside of college. In this chapter, I discuss the key findings from my time spent with Jack, Nikki and Jeanne, the implications of these findings for teachers and researchers of college writing, and finally, the questions these findings raise for future research.

Findings

Students' Self-perceptions Change

My first research sub-question addresses the issue of how simultaneous participation impacts the self-perceptions of student writers. The literature on self-perceptions that has served as a framework for my analysis—the work of Penrose and Geisler, Burgess and Ivanic, and Pajares—has suggested that student self-perceptions are

integral to how students act and write with their discourse communities and classroom settings. This study adds to the existing research some insights that are specific to students with strong identities as writers who write across multiple contexts.

Firstly, Jack, Nikki and Jeanne all believed themselves to be good writers in general; they thought, to a certain extent, they would enter their respective writing classrooms and not have much trouble succeeding. Jack, because he had such a vast vocabulary, Nikki, because she is a good "BSer," and Jeanne, because of her professional experience and high IQ, all had very high confidence levels. Carter's distinction between general and local knowledge provides a sufficient lens for viewing all three student participants in the study. While the students all perceived themselves as good writers in general, in reality, each student brought a specified local knowledge of extra-academic writing to their writing classrooms. When they attempted to apply this local knowledge, and did not receive the results they had anticipated in their respective writing classes, this appeared to alter their self-perceptions slightly.

Secondly, the students' self-perceptions as good writers did not necessarily enhance or impede their performance in their writing classrooms or non-school discourse communities, but did affect their motivation to write. Confidence, in other words, motivated the students to take on writing tasks that students lacking this confidence may have been reluctant to take on. Pajares posited that students' confidence as writers "influenced their writing motivation as well as various writing outcomes in school" (139). I argue, based on the experiences of Jack, Nikki and Jeanne, that confidence may also alter the way students think about their abilities as writers when they do not receive

136

the desired outcomes (lower-than-expected grades in Nikki's case or lack of peer feedback in Jack's case, for example). Students' self-perceptions as writers, therefore, may change due to their simultaneous participation across multiple contexts.

Processes and Style are Repurposed Across Genres (Sometimes)

Given that this study centered on students with already strong identities as writers, these literate identities appeared to, in all three students, cross school and non-school boundaries on several occasions throughout the semester. These instances of crossover—from Jack's forum posts to his school discussion boards, from Nikki's fan fiction world to her essays, and from Jeanne's jingle and poetry writing to her group assignment—demonstrate what I will argue is a bittersweet relationship between academic and non-academic worlds. On one hand, when students are able to successfully repurpose a writing process or style from one genre for another in a completely different context, as many of Roozen's study students have been able to do, they feel good about being enabled to do so. This is evident when Jack repurposes his sarcastic style from his non-school forum posts in his Facebook group discussions for Professional Writing class, and when Jeanne repurposes her jingle writing/poetry for her ENC 1101 group assignment. Instances such as these support what Rose and others have argued regarding the often too-rigid constraints and rules within writing classrooms. When students are able to bring their voices and extra-academic writing knowledge into their writing classroom, their

process and outcome is more meaningful than if the focus of the class is on error avoidance and form.

On the other hand, this study finds that students cannot *always* repurpose their writing practices across multiple genres with great success. They may desire to, as Jack did with his "challenging" forum posts on Webcourses intended to generate long discussions, or as Nikki did when she incorporated anime and fantasy into an expository essay, or as Jeanne did by feeling compelled to tell her personal life stories in her essay. However, because the writing situations were entirely different than those of the discourse communities the students normally practiced their writing within, their texts did not serve the same function in the classroom. Jack's peers truthfully could not care less about his sarcastic, thought-provoking discussion posts on Webcourses. Nikki's teacher was looking for more of a connection between her fictional characters and the readings from class; not a display of how well she knew Harry Potter and Naruto. And Jeanne's teacher did not want a first-person account of a life experience that Jeanne so badly wanted to write. The non-school writing processes and their resulting styles that these students attempted to apply in their writing classrooms produced not necessarily what Wardle calls "mutt genres," but what I would call truly unique school texts. These texts allowed students to incorporate small aspects of their non-school writing into their school writing while a disconnect between their academic and non-academic worlds was still very apparent.

Time, Classroom Constraints Hamper Authority Development

In students with strong identities as writers, I have argued, confidence plays a major role in how they negotiate multiple writing situations at once. Yet confidence does not necessarily equal authority in any given writing context. The levels of authority each student in this study exhibited within their respective discourse communities could not be transferred to their writing engagements in the writing classroom. Gaining authority in the writing classroom was not possible primarily because one semester is not enough time to become an insider or develop "new subject positions," as Paré argues is necessary to gain authority in new discourse communities. Additionally, the writing classroom setting lacks the community and scaffolding that newcomers need to grow into expert writers. Indeed, newcomers often read and write without authority, as Penrose and Geisler have demonstrated.

Simultaneous participation across multiple writing contexts may not help students develop authority in their classroom settings, but the study suggests that multimembership does encourage students to set goals as writers and consider more thoughtfully their literate strengths within their respective discourse communities. Taking what he had learned about clarity and organization of writing in Professional Writing, for instance, Jack decided to use this knowledge to polish and focus his video game reviews on Steam. By being consistent in his reviews, perhaps, he would build more authority as an active member of the online gaming community. Nikki, who repeatedly acknowledged

her weakness as a recursive writer when it came to her novel, decided to join an online

community of novelists to get feedback that would help her grow as a fantasy writer.

For Jeanne, the situation was quite different. Because she had to sacrifice her non-

school writing practices almost completely in order to focus on her five courses, she did

not take any steps toward gaining authority in her non-school writing practices as the

other students did, at least not during this one semester. Sacrifice, the literature has

claimed, is sometimes necessary in order for students to get by in college. What this

study shows that previous research perhaps has not, is that even while students may

diminish or drop their non-school writing practices during school, when they perceive a

need to use aspects of their non-school writing in their school writing, they may still

attempt to do this. A desire to repurpose, I claim, is a strong indication of a student with a

complex, intriguing literate identity who feels he or she has something important to

contribute to the academic conversation. While simultaneous participation may not

directly influence a students' ability to establish authority in a short time frame, at the

very least it allows them to explore different platforms on which they may attempt to

integrate various aspects of their literate identities. This, I argue, should be given more

attention and perhaps embraced by the writing studies field.

<u>Implications for Teachers and Researchers of Writing</u>

The research problem I presented in chapter two states that few studies have

centered on simultaneous writing across discourse communities and school settings. No

studies I am aware of examine specifically how students with strong literate identities negotiate multiple writing practices in short periods of time such as one semester. My objective was not to solve any problem related to this, but to highlight findings that may potentially be useful in the teaching and research of college-level writing.

For teachers, the most obvious implication of this study is that it raises further awareness of the issue of multimembership that Roozen, Ketter and Hunter have already worked toward highlighting. In addition, it asks teachers to consider more fully the self-perceptions of their students as well as the various literate engagements their students partake in while they are enrolled in their classes. In designing their writing courses, teachers might ask themselves how they can encourage students to repurpose their writing practices from outside of school for their classroom assignments and activities, and as Ketter and Hunter have suggested, help them "reconceptualize" their writing as collective work. Perhaps they can have their students write and share literacy narratives or similar assignments that generate self-awareness of the diverse writing contexts they participate in. Much of the scholarship in writing studies shows that teaching genre within a writing classroom poses challenges (some would argue that genre can be taught in professional or technical writing classrooms, but I maintain that it cannot be done as adequately as real-world context). So rather than ask students to practice an "academic" genre that they likely will never encounter again in the same way, why not ask them to write about their writing experiences outside of school? Ask them to think about their discourse communities and how their non-school literacies are relevant at college. Have them view the genres they produce within their discourse communities as socially

constructed, and reject the divide between form and content that still exists within many writing classrooms today. This is not to say that we should ignore issues of formatting, grammar and mechanics completely, especially in a first-year writing class. But by placing a greater emphasis on content, style, and ultimately, identity in student writing, this study and previous research suggests, we can provide students with a richer learning environment that embraces developing identities without asking them to change completely.

For researchers, this study points to a need for further exploration of student writers with strong identities. Clearly Jack, Nikki and Jeanne are not normal college students, but they also are not the only students with passions for extra-academic writing. Nor can their non-school genres of writing even begin to reflect the vast array of writing practices college students engage in outside of school. We should study in further depth, therefore, the literate lives of many more students with intriguing literate identities. I believe it would be worthwhile to study students who write song lyrics for their bands, who write documentary films, who write food blogs, or whatever other writing-related practices students may engage in. The point is that students are more involved in writing than their writing teachers may believe them to be, and with more studies on the multiple discourse communities of student writers, the writing studies field can help foster a positive relationship between literate worlds.

Questions for Future Research

The research questions I posed at the beginning of this study—the questions that actually helped shape the study into what it became—raise additional questions concerning transfer of writing-related knowledge. In my personal experience as a student who wrote across various academic and professional contexts, I wondered how useful my knowledge in one domain would be in another. I began to think more seriously about this situation as it relates to other college students, and ultimately my study prompted the following questions for future research: When a student writes for multiple contexts simultaneously during a short period of time, what might be the likelihood of the student transferring writing-related knowledge? And what might be the benefits or consequences if this transfer should occur?

Transfer, McCarthy, Beaufort and others have shown, is very difficult to see in student writing. Few researchers have studied and theorized about it. As Wardle has claimed, we may not even recognize it when we do see it: "…focusing on a limited search for 'skills' is the reason we do not recognize more evidence of 'transfer': we are looking for apples when those apples are now part of an apple pie" (69). What we do know about transfer is that it does, in many complex ways, occur. Otherwise, the knowledge we acquire in our educations and careers would be meaningless. Considering the outcome of my study as a means of addressing the questions I posed above regarding transfer, I argue that future research should take into account the following:

- Students with strong identities as writers may transfer knowledge differently than students who are less involved with non-school writing practices. Those who simultaneously practice multiple processes and genres of writing while enrolled in a writing class not only have the potential to transfer writing-related knowledge they acquire in the class, but their previously and concurrently acquired knowledge from other contexts may have a great impact on how (if at all) transfer occurs.

- Given that identity development is so complex in students who simultaneously write across contexts, transfer should not only encompass what knowledge the student brings to new settings, but also what the new settings contribute to the students' literate identities. Transfer may be viewed as a two-way street.

Conclusion

How does simultaneously writing across multiple contexts impact the literate identities of student writers? Firstly, multimembership causes students to ponder how they view themselves as writers. Jack, Nikki and Jeanne, students who all had great confidence in themselves as writers, found that what worked for them in one context did not necessarily work (or work in the same way) in other contexts. Secondly, writing many different texts in many different contexts at once sometimes makes sacrifice a necessarily act. In two of my case studies, students gave up much of their time spent on non-school writing completely. In the third case, the student sacrificed her non-school

practices almost entirely. This indicates that literate identities are not only shaped by backgrounds and experiences, but also the values students assign to their different writing activities. Thirdly, writing across multiple contexts enriches the literate lives of students. Whether or not explicit repurposing of writing occurred in Jack, Nikki and Jeanne's writing practices, I believe that in every writing task the students engaged in over the spring 2011 semester, there was some element, however miniscule, of the writing they had done in another context. And lastly, simultaneous participation across contexts complicates the process of acquiring new writing-related knowledge. Each student in this study entered their writing classrooms with conceptions of what writing should look like and what it should do. By the end of the semester, each of their conceptions had changed and as a result, their identities as writers had changed. The classroom did not change their identities alone, however. Knowledge acquired in their writing classrooms combined with the students' current and past writing practices, however distant these practices may have seemed from school, reconstructed the students' already rich literate identities. What this means is that students often must shift between their academic and non-academic worlds as they participate in both at the same time, and as they do this, they may attempt to explore what each world has to offer the other.

APPENDIX A: IRB OUTCOME LETTER

University of Central Florida

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Autumn P. Shrum**

Date: **November 12, 2010**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/12/2010, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Writing Across Multiple Discourse Communities: How Busy Students Develop Identities as Writers
Investigator:	Autumn P Shrum
IRB Number:	SBE-10-07226
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 11/12/2010 10:21:31 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH FORM

University of
**Central
Florida**

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: Writing Across Multiple Discourse Communities: How Busy Students Develop Identities as Writers

Principal Investigator: Autumn Shrum, M.A. English student, 321-266-2177 or ashrum@knights.ucf.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Elizabeth Wardle, Ph.D., 407-823-5416 or ewardle@mail.ucf.edu

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The purpose of this research is to explore how student involvement in both academic and non-academic writing activities affects their ability to develop identities as writers in a college undergraduate writing classroom.

- If you decide to participate you will be asked to take part in interviews with the researcher, share examples of your writing with the researcher, and allow the researcher to join you in settings (classroom, home, work, etc.) where you practice writing. We expect that you will be in this study over the course of the Spring 2011 semester at the University of Central Florida or Brevard Community College (approximately January through May 2011). An initial interview will be conducted at the beginning of the semester and follow-up interviews will be conducted throughout the semester as needed. Throughout the semester, the researcher may observe your writing classroom at least once per week (if it is a face-to-face class), and may observe you in other academic or non-academic settings where you normally write. You will be asked to submit copies of papers from your writing class and other texts for the researcher to analyze.

- We expect that you will be in this research study for about five months. Most of your participation will be done during interviews with the researcher. Interviews may take from 30 minutes to one hour each time. If you are taking a face-to-face writing class, the researcher may observe your class on a regular basis. Observations may also take place in your other classes that require writing assignments and non-academic settings where you write, such as work or home.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to Dr. Elizabeth Wardle, Associate Professor, UCF, at 407-823-5416 or by e-mail at ewardle@mail.ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Anson, Chris M. and L. Lee Forsberg. "Moving Beyond the Academic Community: Transitional Stages in Professional Writing." *Written Communication* 7.2 (1990): 200-231. Print.

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. 623-653. Print.

Bazerman, Charles. "The Problem of Writing Knowledge" *The Norton Book of Composition Studies.* Ed. Susan Miller. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009. 502-514. Print.

Bergman, Linda S. and Janet Zepernick. "Disciplinarity and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write" *Writing Program Administrators* 31.1 (2007): 124-149. Print.

Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2007. Print.

Bizzell, Patricia. "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?" *College Composition and Communication* 37.3 (1986): 294-301. Print.

Burgess, Amy and Roz Ivanic. "Writing and Being Written: Issues of Identity Across Timescales" *Written Communication* 27.2 (2010): 228-255. Print.

Caroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers.* Carbondale and Edwardsvill, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. Print.

Carter, Michael. "The Idea of Expertise: An Exploration of Cognitive and Social

    Dimensions of Writing" *College Composition and Communication* 41.3 (1990):

    265-286.

Clark, Irene L. "Process." *Concepts in Composition: Theory and Practice in the Teaching*

    of Writing. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003. 1-29. Print.

Cook-Gumperz, Jenny. "Dilemmas of Identity: Oral and Written Literacies in the Making

    of a Basic Writing Student" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 24.4 (1993):

    336-356. Print.

Courage, Richard. "The Interaction of Public and Private Literacies" College

    Composition and Communication 44.4 (1993): 484-496. Print.

Devitt, Amy. "Generalizing About Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept" *College*

    Composition and Communication 44.4 (1993): 573-586. Print.

Dias, Patrick, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway, and Anthony Pare. Worlds Apart: *Acting*

    and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts. New York: Routledge, 1999.

    Print.

Elbow, Peter. *Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and*

    Teaching Writing. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.

Gee, James Paul. "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction" *Journal of*

    Education 171.1 (1989): 5-17. Print.

Griffin, Gabriele. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh

    University Press, 2005. Print.

Griffin, Gabriele. "Discourse Analysis" *Research Methods for English Studies*. Ed. Gabriele Griffin. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. 91-110. Print.

Harris, Joseph. "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 40.1 (1989): 11-22. Print.

Johns, Ann M. "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice." *Text, Role and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*. Eds. Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 51-70. Print.

Ketter, Jean and Judy Hunter. "Creating a Writer's Identity on the Boundaries of Two Communities of Practice." *Writing Selves/Writing Societies: Research from Activity Perspectives.* Eds. Charles Bazerman and David Russell. Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Mind, Culture, and Activity, 2002. 307-329. Print.

Lave, Jean. :Situating Learning in Communities of Practice" *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition*. Eds. Lauren B. Resnick, John M. Levine and Stephanie D. Teasley. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1991. 63-82.

McCarthy, Lucille. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." *Landmark Essays on Writing Across the Curriculum.* Eds. Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell. Hermagoras Press, 1994. 125-155. Print.

Pajares, Frank. "Self-efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Acheivement in Writing: A Review of the Literature" *Reading and Writing Quarterly* 19 (2003): 139-158. Print.

Perkins, David N. and Gavriel Salomon. "Transfer of Learning" *International Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford, England: Pergamont, 1992. Web. 21 July 2011.

Petraglia, Joseph. "Writing as an Unnatural Act" *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*. Ed. Joseph Petraglia. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erbaum Associates, 1995. Print.

Paré, Anthony. "Genre and Identity: Individuals, Institutions, and Ideology" *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre*. Eds. Richard Coe, Lorelei Lingard, and Tatiana Teslenko. Creskill, NJ: Hampton, 2002. Print.

Penrose, Ann M. and Cheryl Geisler. "Reading and Writing Without Authority" *College Composition and Communication* 45.4 (1994): 505-520. Print.

Porter, James E. "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" *Rhetoric Review* 5.1 (1986): 34-47. Print.

Roozen, Kevin. "Fan Fic-ing English Studies: A Case Study Exploring the interplay of Vernacular Literacies and Disciplinary Engagement" *Research in the Teaching of English* 44.2 (2009): 136-169. Print.

Roozen, Kevin. "From Journals to Journalism: Tracing Trajectories of Literate Development" *College Composition and Communication* 60.3 (2009): 541-572. Print.

Roozen, Kevin. "Journalism, Poetry, Stand-up Comedy, and Academic Literacy: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Literate Activities" *Journal of Basic Writing* 27.1 (2008): 5-34. Print.

Roozen, Kevin. "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's

    Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes." *Written Communication* 27.3

    (2010): 318-354. Print.

Rose, Mike. "Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist

    Analysis of Writer's Block." *College Composition and Communication* 31.4

    (1980): 389-401. Print.

Schuetze, Hans G. and Maria Slowey. "Participation and Exclusion: A Comparative

    Analysis of Non-Traditional Students and lifelong Learners in Higher Education"

    Higher Education 44.3 (2002): 309-327. Print.

Summerfield, Penny. "Oral History as a Research Method" *Research Methods for*

    English Studies. Ed. Gabriele Griffin. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University

    Press, 2005. 47-66. Print.

Swales, John. "Approaching the Concept of Discourse Community" *Annual Meeting at*

    the Conference on College Composition and Communication March 19-21 1987

    Atlanta. Print.

Wardle, Elizabeth. "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write

    the Genres of the University?" *College Composition and Communication* 60.4

    (2009): 765-789. Print.

Wardle, Elizabeth. "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC: Preliminary Results of a

    Longitudinal Study." *Writing Program Administration* 31.1/2 (2007): 65-85.

    Web. 24 Sept. 2011.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity.* New York:

Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.