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Merz, Mary Ann

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS: SEVEN CASE STUDIES

The University of Oklahoma PH.D. 1981

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS: SEVEN CASE STUDIES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

MARY ANN MERZ

Norman, Oklahoma

1981

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS: SEVEN CASE STUDIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		iii
Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	6
	Purpose	6
	Limitations	7
	Definition of Terms	7
	Organization of the Study	8
II.	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	9
III.	METHOD AND DESIGN	28
IV.	THE CASE STUDIES	32
	Joe	32
	Amy	37
	Ken	46
	Ted	54
	Sue	59
	Joy	67
	Liz	76
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY		104

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS: SEVEN CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1960's, most literature devoted to the teaching of writing emphasized the student's finished product and not the methods by which the student's paper was developed.[1] Both researchers and writing teachers continued to devise new methods and/or castigate older techniques of teaching composition by analyzing the finished products submitted to them by student writers. Empirical research of the period was therefore known as "product-oriented" research.[2] Various approaches to this type of analysis passed in and out of vogue, depending upon one's inclination or the preference of one's university professor. As Erwin R. Steinberg reported in an essay on the cognitive processes of composing, "some writing teachers are old enough to remember when most teachers 'knew' that not only the best way at the time but the best conceivable way to describe how the English language functions was to use traditional grammar."[3] Even more teachers will remember, he continued, when the only

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[1]Earl W. Buxton, the chairman's preface to the report, "National Council of Teachers of English Research Report No. 13," (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971), p. v.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Erwin R. Steinberg, "A Garden of Opportunities and a Thicket of Dangers," Cognitive Processes in Writing, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates, 1981), p. 158.

learned approach possible demanded a thorough background in structural linguistics.[1] Innovative teachers attempted to teach composition in a transformational-generative grammatical framework. All three models were there for the asking.

In spite of these attempts to rectify the problem, however, verbal abilities of American high school and university students continued to decline. By 1975, the problem had become so widespread that members of the College Entrance Examination Board formed a panel of respected educators to investigate the twelve-year-long decline in college entrance examination scores. Verbal skills in particular evidenced in that year the biggest drop in two decades. [2]

While sociologists were attempting to explain the decline in writing skills as only one among many symptoms of a massive "regression of the intellectually invertebrate,"[3] researchers were equally busy trying to discover in a Sputnik era why Ivan knew more than Johnny, whether Marshall McLuhan spoke the truth in The Medium is the Message when he summed up the long-term impact of television on the written word, and whether a knowledge of science and math might not, in the final analysis, be more globally important than a command of the English language.

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[1]Ibid.

[2]"Why Johnny Can't Write," Time, December 8, 1975, p. 58.

[3]Ibid.

And teachers of composition continued to teach, some remaining faithful to the dogma that students learn to write by learning how the language functions, and others emphasizing creativity and the contemporary media of communication. For those who chose a structural linguistic approach, the question of whether students have need to study the rules of language became moot since only an extremely small number of the world's languages even exist in written form; therefore, oral expression takes precedence over any attempt to display those words in written form. Voices such as that of Mario Pei the philologist, however, kept making themselves heard: "If you will scoff at language study . . . how, save in terms of language, will you scoff?"[1]

The political activism which dominated much of the Sixties added yet another stumbling block to the quest for literate and precise composition. In The Culture of Narcissism, Christopher Lasch discusses the events that preceded and followed the 1963 march on Washington by prominent blacks and their supporters who believed that a common cultural tradition was a prerequisite for advancement of members of minority groups.[2] To this end, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others were adamant in their request for educational integration. Following right behind them, however, were black power specialists who insisted that the black subculture was an attractive alternative; to impose

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, (New York: Warner Books Edition, 1979).

white culture, to impose standard English on members of minority groups was to deny them their inheritance. Teaching standard English to minority students and lower class white students acquired political implications that reached far outside the classroom. By 1974, even the prestigious Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English adopted a policy statement entitled, "Students' Rights to Their Own Language." "The important thing," said Elizabeth McPherson, a St. Louis school teacher who helped formulate the first draft of this statement," is that people find themselves through their own language."[1]

Still, standing firm were noted educators and respected authors who insisted that we must teach English composition in standard fashion. Carlos Baker, for example, chairman of the English department of Princeton in the Seventies and author of a best-selling biography of Hemingway, insisted that "learning to write is the hardest, most important thing any child does. Learning to write is learning to think."[2] Joining Baker was Mina Shaughnessy who in her well-received book for English teachers insisted that the right of a minority student to his own language is overshadowed by his right to use the dominant code of a literate society.[3] Hurn reiterates this viewpoint in his

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[1]"Why Johnny Can't Write,", Time, December 9, 1975, p. 58.

[2]Ibid. p. 61.

[3]Mina Shaughnessey, Errors and Expectations, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

sociology of education text when he discusses the importance of cognitive skill training: "To neglect skill training . . . excludes a sizeable proportion of our youth from the access to that heritage for which these cognitive skills are a precondition." [1]

It would seem that during this literacy crisis, the researcher's attempt to discover why students cannot write was not being fulfilled by analyzing students' finished products. One of the problems, noted Steinberg, was that writing teachers had not been provided with a model which demonstrated success when transferred from the laboratory to the classroom.[2] Nor were psychologists of help, "because by the time the problem of teaching writing had become widespread enough to merit serious attention, psychology, in an attempt to become scientific, had become behavioristic."[3]

Fortunately, during this period from the late Sixties to the early Seventies, one researcher began carefully constructing a new approach to composition analysis, the end result of which would be remembered later as the turning point in composition research. It was Janet Emig who, in 1971, attempted to analyze student writing while the student was in the process of the act, and as her new method began to be recognized among researchers and writing teachers, a dramatic

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[1]Christopher J. Hurn, The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978), p. 271.

[2]Steinberg, Cognitive Processes in Writing, p. 156.

[3]Ibid.

shift occurred. As a result, attention to the composing process, rather than to the finished product of the composing act, dominated research and theory in the decade of the Seventies.

Emig's investigation into the Composing Process of Twelfth Graders encouraged new direction for composition teachers, researchers, and even cognitive psychologists--a direction which provided for this past decade an abundant body of literature on the composing process. Further, when Emig applied the "composing aloud" technique to the composing process, she opened the door to yet another innovative method by which researchers could investigate writing and develop hypotheses for further experimentation.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to isolate one of the issues assumed to be fundamental in the composing process--planning--and to investigate how attention to planning differs among writers from the least skilled to the most proficient. The study then examines seven different writers of increasing proficiency in an effort to compare their composing processes in terms of one of the integral aspects of that process--planning.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to characterize and describe some of the differences that exist in planning considerations among writers from the most unskilled to the most proficient. The value of the study is that it constitutes an addition to the growing body of research data on the composing processes of student writers, and may, from its concluding data, generate hypotheses for further research.

Limitations

First, the population is limited to individuals available for case study during the spring semester of the 1980-81 academic year at the University of Oklahoma, and even more specifically, in the case of the student writers, to individuals enrolled in the investigator's freshman composition classes. The sample is limited to subjects who would voluntarily compose aloud for the investigator. Second the classification system by which student proficiency levels are assigned is limited to the system employed by the University of Oklahoma, a system based on a single outside, objective measure of writing ability, the English quartile of the A.C.T.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Protocol - A protocol is a description of the activities, ordered in time, which a subject engages in while performing a task. In a "composing aloud" protocol, subjects are asked to say aloud everything they think and everything that occurs to them while performing the task, no matter how trivial it may seem. Even with such explicit instructions, however, subjects may forget and fall silent--completely absorbed in the task.[1]

Protocol Analysis - In analyzing a protocol, we attempt to describe the psychological processes that a subject uses to perform a task. The investigator's task in analyzing a protocol is to take the incomplete record that the protocol provides together with knowledge of the nature of the task and of human capabilities and infer from these the processes by which the subject performs the task.[2]

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[1]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes", an article in Cognitive Processes in Writing, ed. Steinberg, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates, 1981), p. 4.

[2]Ibid.

Planning - Planning refers to any oral and written establishment of elements and parameters before or during a discursive formulation. Prewriting occurs but once during a writing process, but planning can occur many times.[1] Planning elements and parameters include decisions about assignment, audience, writing persona, meaning, and text.[2]

Organization of the Study

Chapter I presents an introduction to the investigation which includes the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and preview of the organization of the study.

Chapter II presents a review of the related literature.

Chapter III presents the method and design of the study.

Chapter IV presents the case studies of the seven subjects together with a comparative analysis of their planning decisions during the composing process.

Chapter V presents a summary as well as implications, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

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[1]Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971), p. 39.

[2]Linda Flower, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," College Composition and Communication, February, 1980, p. 24-28.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

For this investigator, research completed during the late Sixties and the decade of the Seventies appeared to fall into four major classifications, at least insofar as the research was related to the subject for this study -- that is, whether attention to planning is a significant factor when unskilled writers are compared with skilled writers. These four categories are as follows:

1. Literature which documents the existence of a "composing process" and attempts to define that process and develop nomenclature to describe it.

2. Completed research on various aspects of the composing process such as prewriting, planning, writing, and revising.

3. Studies which describe skilled writers, expert writers, proficient writers, and conversely, studies which describe unskilled writers, novice writers, and less proficient writers.

4. Studies which compare skilled writers with unskilled writers, expert writers with novice writers, and proficient writers with less proficient writers.

Throughout the review of literature, it was the investigator's intention to pay particular attention to that aspect of the composing process commonly referred to as "planning."

The composing processes of writers has been the subject of a great body of scholarly discussion and research since the publication in 1971 of Janet Emig's The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders. Prior to 1971, Emig found only two extended efforts to use case study to examine student writing. One was a 1961 study by Holbrook wherein he collected all the writing produced by his own students which received C-and D-grades and analyzed their writing with the aid of a psychiatrist in an effort to predict their future mental health.[1] The second study cited by Emig was conducted by Herbert Kohl, an elementary school teacher, who described much of the writing done by sixth-grade children in his Harlem classroom.[2] Both of these studies were concerned more with product than process, and for this reason it seems appropriate to begin this review of related literature with Emig's 1971 publication as documentation of the existence of a composing process, followed by significant attempts both to define and develop a nomenclature for that process.

In her effort to investigate "the ways that students usually or typically behave as they write," Emig chose the case-study approach, an approach suggested by the editors of Research in Written Composition

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[1]David Holbrook, English for the Rejected: Training Literacy in the Lower Streams of the Secondary School, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

[2]Herbert Kohl, 36 Children, (New York: New American Library, 1967).

to "illuminate the psychological dimension in student writing--this despite, or because of, the fact that none of the 504 studies cited in their review of the research incorporates a case-study approach."[1] Eight twelfth graders of average or above-average intelligence were selected for the study, one of whom--Lynn--was further selected for an in-depth case study. Another unusual feature of the Emig study was her decision to have the subjects compose aloud; that is, the subjects were asked to verbalize their thoughts and feelings while they were in the process of writing. Comments made by students during the composing process provide the initial data for Emig's study, followed by a writing autobiography of each subject together with a taped interview of their earlier writing experiences. Emig found that among older secondary students, there appeared to be two dominant modes of composing: the reflexive or affective, and the extensive or cognitive. The data further revealed that the composing process for the two dominant modes differ in both length and clustering of components.

Most researchers would no doubt agree that it was not Emig's conclusions that have established her study as the point from which research in the composing process began. On the contrary, it was Emig's decision to employ the case-study approach, combined with the composing-aloud technique, which makes her study unique and of value to future researchers.

Although case-study research in the behavioral sciences was already popular at the time of the Emig study, Janet Emig can be considered

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[1]Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971), p. 2.

the pioneer in the use of case study for the field of composition research, specifically for research into the composing process. In a treatise on the psychological process of cognitive thinking and planning, Miller, Galanter, and Pribram discuss the use of case study as a forerunner to the possibility of testing various problem-solving methods. Miller, Galanter, and Pribram suggest that when the method is used intelligently, it is a source of valuable information about the detailed process of thought.[1]

Additionally, Shontz, in categorizing seven broad uses for the case study, cites the use of the method for the establishment of a data pool. In his opinion, the primary feature of the method is that "the data themselves are collected without prior commitment to their use in the specific manner which is finally employed. The same descriptive report may often be used in a variety of ways to test a variety of hypotheses."[2]

Again, Rarick offers support for the case-study method of compiling research data: "While the presence or absence of observed traits does not necessarily establish a causal relationship, identification of these characteristics does give the research worker something definite upon which to build."[3]

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[1]George Miller, Eugene A. Galanter, Karl H. Pribram, Plans and the Structure of Behavior, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), p. 5.

[2]Franklin C. Shontz, Research Methods in Personality, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), p. 73-74.

[3]Lawrence Rarick, "The Case Study," Research Methods, (Washington, D. C.: American Association for Health, 1959), p. 264-265.

For support of case study with particular reference to the composing process, Burton justifies the method as a desirable way to generate hypotheses.[1] Braddock also makes a strong appeal for case study in research on the composing process:

> Individual differences may cancel out in studies using the means as the measure of a group. Case studies have done much to help remedial reading specialists understand and assist their clients. And the similar complexities of writing suggest that much may be gained by developing case study procedures . . . .[2]

One final comment on the value of case-study methodology was made by Helmstadter, who stated that when researchers are attempting to formulate new concepts, the case-study approach is capable of high productivity: "Its great advantage is that it is a tremendous producer of ideas, suggestions, and hypotheses about behavior. It seems almost an absolutely essential technique when exploring new fields."[3]

The second significant feature of the Emig study was, naturally, its employment of the composing-aloud methodology. Several researchers have followed Emig in the use of the method for gathering information about the composing process, but Flower and Hayes have most employed and refined it. Their method involves the recording and analyzing of protocols of writers composing aloud. They stress the values of their approach:

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[1]Dwight Burton, "Research in the Teaching of English: The Troubled Dream," Research in the Teaching of English, Fall, 1973, p. 160-169.

[2]Richard Braddock, Research in Written Composition, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1961), p. 31.

[3]G. C. Helmstadter, Research Concepts in Human Behavior, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 52.

> The power of protocol analysis lies in the richness of its data. Even though protocols are typically incomplete, they provide us with much more information about processes by which tasks are performed than does simply examining the outcome of the process. Knowing what answer people get in solving problems is much less informative than catching even fragmentary glimpses of the complex processes by which they arrive at the answer.[1]

Although Rogers and Pianko chose not to utilize the technique lest it detract in some way and make their observations of the particular writing experience atypical, there is strong justification for utilizing the technique when the investigator is attempting to gather information which is otherwise unavailable. Miller, Galanter, and Pribram explain with particularity how the advantages outweigh the disadvantages:

> Obviously we can never know whether or not we have the theory for any domain of inquiry. There is always a variety of alternative plans that could have led the subject to exhibit the same behavior; the best we can hope to do is to select the simplest one compatible with all the facts. In this endeavor, the subject's verbal report has one great recommendation in its favor, because language, for all its notorious shortcomings, is still the least ambiguous of all the channels open from one human being to another.[2]

One of the few researchers of significance who preceded Emig in discussing an aspect of the composing process was Rohman. He first acknowledges writing as a process and then describes a writing project which he divides into three distinct areas. Everything up to the point where the writing idea is ready to be transcribed into the written word

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[1]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes," Cognitive Processes in Writing, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates, 1981), p. 10.

[2]Miller, Galanter, Pribram, Plans and the Structure of Behavior.

is called "prewriting." Everything written after the first word is called "writing" and "rewriting." Rohman defines "prewriting" as "the stage of discovery in the writing process in which the person assimilates his subject to himself." To isolate the principle of this assimilation, Rohman attempts to describe the type of thinking which precedes writing. What he concludes with is a method of teaching heuristic or problem-solving techniques to inexperienced writers to aid them in this "prewriting" phase. Rohman relies heavily on Bruner's Act of Discovery Theory and also makes mention of the poet-critic Ciardi's use of the term "groping."[1]

Rohman's reference to Bruner is significant. Much of the literature concerning prewriting deals with whether or not this process is a cognitive one which is capable of being ordered, or whether there is in fact some mysterious inspirational process involved. Bruner discusses studying the cognitive process as one approach unexplored by the psychologist: "Its medium of exchange seems to be the metaphor paid out by the left hand. It is a way that grows happy hunches and lucky guesses, that is stirred into connective activity by looking sidewise rather than directly." Bruner acknowledges that intuition may generate a grammar of its own. He does indicate, however, that it is his belief that only through the exercise of problem-solving and the effort of discovery can one learn "the working heuristics of discovery; the

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[1]Gordon Rohman, "PreWriting: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," College Composition and Communication, Vol. XVI, 1965, pp. 106-112.

more one has practice, the more likely one is to generalize what one has learned into a style that serves for any kind of task."[1]

Bruner, like Ciardi, makes reference to some intuitive procedure, when he identifies the writing process as an act of groping. The problem for the inexperienced writer occurs, obviously, as Flower and Hayes note, when the discovery never "makes itself known." It is again Flower and Hayes who insist that the researcher be concerned with how one discovers rather than with what one discovers.[2]

In a later article by Flower and Hayes, the authors note that even in the midst of a "composition renaissance" writing teachers are employing methods used by teachers during the seventeenth century. While writing outside of the classroom is highly goal-oriented, writing within the framework of the class tends to consist of set rules and prescriptions for success. To narrow the gap between prescription and experience, the authors provide a problem-solving alternative for classroom use. Their model involves three parts: planning, generating ideas into words, and constructing for an audience. The implication is that "problem-solving works for many writers because it allows for the disorderly dynamics of serious thinking and encourages an analytical and experimental attitude for the writer."[3]

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[1]Jerome S. Bruner, On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[2]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," College Composition and Communication, February 1980, pp. 21-32.

[3]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process," College English, December 1977, pp. 449-461.

Knoblauch offers a brief history of "sense of purpose" as the foundation for any comprehensive theory of discourse. After reviewing several theories, he gives credit to Moffett for stating the issue precisely: "Beneath the content of any message is intent. And form embodies that intent. Intuitively or not, an author chooses his techniques according to his meaning." Knoblauch then concurs with Odell that if one is going to research composing, one must look not at the product but at the process. Knoblauch offers a case study which resulted from his work as a communications advisor; it provides another example not only of the complexity but also the definability of operational purposes in the composing process.[1]

The most comprehensive treatment of the process-versus-product theory may well be Flower's and Hayes's contributions to a collection of essays gathered at a symposium on cognitive processes in writing and published in a book edited by Steinberg.[2] The authors begin by noting that even though many have recognized the importance of process in the teaching of writing, few have actually studied processes experimentally. A discussion of protocol analysis is offered with particular emphasis on its value in identifying composing behaviors. They then describe in detail a recursive model of expository writing which allows for intermixing of stages. They stress with great emphasis that the model is not intended to suggest sequence.

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[1]C. H. Knoblauch, "Intentionality in the Writing Process: A Case Study," College Composition and Communication, May, 1980, pp. 153-159.

[2]Edwin R. Steinberg, ed., Cognitive Processes in Writing.

In the same text they offer another way of looking at the composing process. They ask, assuming a writer can learn individual operations, what happens when a writer with knowledge of independent subskills attempts to put them all together? What kinds of information does the writer need to acquire a dynamic of composing? An analogy is drawn in which writing is described as the act of juggling a number of simultaneous constraints. Planning, say the authors, is one of the ways in which writers reduce cognitive stress which results from having to cope with all of the simultaneous juggling. Planning, they say, prevents short-circuiting. The authors describe the various constraints, and then argue that a writer may "satisfice"; that is, a writer may choose to take the first acceptable solution to a rhetorical problem. Planning, then, becomes an alternative to satisficing or cognitive overload. "As we all know," they conclude, "in effective writing a meaningful organization of information takes its logic from the writer's higher level plan To Do something. Perhaps we need to teach such plans more vigorously. One of the current tasks of rhetoric is to explore and explain those that govern how we write."[1]

Next, the investigator reviewed literature which analyzed various aspects of the composing process. Rohman, as previously indicated, was early in his theory of pre-writing. Odell discussed prewriting from a tagmemic rather than discovery point of view. His work gives results of a teaching technique he employed to help students in the prewriting

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[1]Flower and Hayes, "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process." p. 460

stages of composition, based on Pike's tagmemic discovery theory.[1] The study provides further support for the notion that the teaching of prewriting procedures can favorably affect student writing.[2]

Following Emig's study of twelfth graders and Graves's observational study of seven-year-olds is Mischel's case study of Clarence, another twelfth grader who differed from Emig's subjects in that he was a quiet, introspective student who wrote with dialectical interference. Although Mischel was concerned with several aspects of his subject's composing process, this investigator found his discussion of Clarence's prewriting techniques pertinent. Most of his activity was mental, and in Clarence's words, "sometimes a lot comes, and sometimes nothing, and sometimes a little--it all depends."[3]

Clarence's analysis of his mental planning is reiterated more skillfully by Gutschow who observes that "the student writer typically does little prefiguring and moves inexorably from the beginning of the composition to the end, with no major reformations or revisings."[4]

Another cognitive process theory is offered by Stallard, who reviews early research in which writing was reduced to a study of rules

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[1]Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, Kenneth L. Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970).

[2]Lee Odell, "Measuring the Effect of Instruction in Pre-Writing," Research in the Teaching of English, Fall 1974, pp. 228-240.

[3]Terry Mischel, "A Case Study of a Twelfth-Grade Writer," Research in the Teaching of English, Winter 1974, pp. 303-314.

[4]Deana M. Gutschow, "Stopping the March Through Georgia", On Righting Writing, ed. Clapp, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1975), pp. 96-100.

derived from analysis of finished products. He believes that the primary task facing any writer is that of discovering for himself what he can say about a topic. This step--thinking--whether it be called pre-writing, discovery, or invention, is the first step the writer must take. A writer must develop the ability to "verbalize experience and learning and, ultimately, manipulate them into a piece of communicable written prose." Even though they must be discussed separately, Stallard indicates, they more than likely occur simultaneously.[1]

In yet another protocol analysis, this time of a teacher of writing, Perl confirms the recursive feature of a writer's cognitive process. She questions the traditional notion that writing is a linear process and, unlike Crowley who found that inexperienced writers have a linear composing process, recognizes the role of recursiveness in writing, at least in the experienced writer.[2]

One other area remains in this category of literature which analyzes a particular aspect of the composing process. Once again Flower and Hayes discuss the metaphor of discovery to describe the writer's creative process. Discovery, to them, is a broad term which covers everything from classical invention to modern heuristics such as tagmemics and prewriting. This metaphor has limitations, according to the authors, when one uses it either to teach or to analyze the creative process itself. Discovery is the end result of a complicated process. What needs attention is the process itself. Another reason to

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[1]Charles Stallard, "Composing: A Cognitive Process Theory," College Composition and Communication, Vol. XXVII, 1976, pp. 181-184.

[2]Sondra Perl, "Understanding Composing," College Composition and Communication, December 1980, pp. 363-369.

exercise caution when dealing with the discovery concept is that it can lead to self-defeating strategies. Those who sponsor the discovery theory indicate that if the writer cannot discover by means of external sources, then he can surely look "to one's own experience." As the authors state, however, "what is there to discover if only confused experience and conflicting perceptions are stored in the writer's memory?" It is the act of creating, not discovering, that leads to significant writing. What follows is their study of the way writers guide themselves through the act of making meaning.[1]

Specifically, the investigators in this study wanted to answer three questions: Do writers spend much time analyzing their audience? When writers do spend time thinking about their rhetorical problem, does it generate new ideas? Are there any significant differences in the way good and poor writers go about this task? Their method involved protocol analysis of both expert and novice writers. Their findings included the fact that expert writers spend time thinking about how they wanted to affect a reader while the novice writers were more involved with their topic. This difference is important, they conclude, because "one of the most powerful strategies we saw for producing new ideas throughout the composing process was planning what one wanted to do to or for one's reader."[2] A second difference between the two groups was the extent to which writers assume a persona. In their

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[1]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery," p. 28.

[2]Ibid. p. 27.

study of this feature, they concluded that some of the novice writers never moved beyond a generate-and-express goal, which in its simplest form can produce nothing more than an interior monologue. A final issue with which the research concerned itself was the issue of conventional text features, such as capturing attention and using details. The main conclusion of the study was that "good writers are simply solving a different problem than are poor writers." Implications for research from this study indicated there is much to be learned about how writers define their rhetorical problems as they write, and why they make the choices they make.[1]

With the concept of a process documented and studies offering a nomenclature for aspects of that process cited, a brief history of studies utilizing this nomenclature is in order. In Hooks' dissertation (1972), professional writers are examined to determine their concept of composing as a process. Hooks' study indicates that even though some well-known authors question the teachability of composition, their remarks identify elements for effective writing. In addition, all of them viewed composition as a total process and thought that both the idea and the intended audience dictate language and style.[2]

Stallard (1974) offers another analysis of writers of like proficiency in an attempt to discover what cognitive processes characterize the good writer up to and during the act of writing. His sample

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Janice Hooks, "An Analysis of Writing Skills as Described by Selected Professional Writers," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Indiana, 1972.

includes fifteen good writers and a second group selected at random to serve as a comparison group. He found that when he asked students if they made any type of mental outline before beginning to write, forty percent of the good writers responded affirmatively and twenty percent of the random sample responded affirmatively.[1]

The Connecticut English Journal (1977) devoted one of its issues to a survey of Connecticut professional writers for advice they might offer to the writing teacher. The suggestions were usually similar. Among others, Malcomb Cowley, John Hershey, Arthur Miller, and William Styron stated that to write well one must not only read well but constantly. They suggested that the more one writes, the better one writes.[2]

Finally, in the literature were relatively few comparisons of writers at different levels of proficiency. In a description of traditional and remedial writing students, Rogers with Pianko (1978) examined the possible relationships among attitudes, processes, and products of two types of writers. Implications for teaching are concerned with the need to discover and implement ways to enhance and elaborate the composing experience.[3]

In a videotape analysis of the composing processes of six freshman writers, Bechtel (1978) attempted to define and identify student

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[1]Charles Stallard, "An Analysis of the Writing Behavior of Good Student Writers," Research in the Teaching of English, Fall, 1974, pp. 206-218.

[2]Connecticut English Journal, Volume 8, Number 2, Spring 1977.

[3]Luisa Rogers with Sharon Pianko, "The Composing Acts of College Freshman Writers," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rutgers, 1978.

writing strategies and procedures. She found that certain traits, such as high verbal ability, distinguished effective writers from ineffective ones.[1]

Pianko (1979) discusses another finding from her previous study with Rogers in which traditional and remedial students were compared. One of her conclusions in this study is that composition teachers must encourage more self-initiated writing. Pianko's study is the first to investigate the processes of a cross-section of freshman writers based on a multi-faceted approach of direct observation of students composing, immediate interviews on behaviors exhibited while composing, and general writing background interviews. Like Bechtel, Pianko selects the videotape rather than the composing aloud method.[2]

Parrish's study with protocol analysis (1980) examines three eleventh-grade writers of varying proficiency levels and data reinforce Flower and Hayes's suggestion that inexperienced writers would profit from teaching strategies which encouraged problem-solving techniques in the composing process.[3]

Lunsford (1980) also investigates the difference between two kinds of writers, basic and skilled. Her study is one of the few recent

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[1]Judith Bechtel, "Videotape Analysis of the Composing Processes of Six Male College Freshman Writers," paper presented at the annual Midwest Regional Conference on English, 1979.

[2]Sharon K. Pianko, "A Description of the Composing Processes of College Freshman WRiters," Research in the Teaching of English, February 1979, pp. 5-22.

[3]J. D. Parrish, "The Composing Processes of Eleventh Graders," unpublished research paper, The University of Texas, 1980.

investigations which rely on the finished product for the data. The basic writer, she concludes, adopts an egocentric rhetorical stance and is unable to achieve the level of cognitive development, vocabulary choice, or linguistic virtuosity evidenced by the skilled writer.[1]

In an essay written for a text on basic writing, Perl reports on her study of the writing processes of basic writers. She examines three questions: How do basic writers write? How can their writing processes be analyzed? What does an increasing understanding of their processes suggest about the nature of the composing process, in particular the way in which writing is taught in the school? Her underlying assumption is that an adequate understanding of a human process will most likely develop from observing people while they engage in that process. Perl follows Emig's example in asking her subjects to compose aloud and then conducts historical interviews. She concludes, among other findings, that these students demonstrate four kinds of planning behavior: rephrasing of topic to connect with experience; narrowing of topic through dichotomizing or classifying; focusing on a key word in the topic; and deciding that even though they were not sure what they wanted to say, they would begin anyway and try to "figure it out" as they wrote. Perl does not suggest that her subjects did no planning. Instead, her data suggest that certain planning strategies can and do take place in a relatively short time. The data further suggest that planning continues as the students are writing and in fact the very act of having

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[1]Andrea Lunsford, "The Content of Basic Writers' Essays," College Composition and Communication, October 1980, pp. 278-290.

words on paper may enable the students to reflect upon them and thus develop them to a greater extent. As a result of this study, Perl constructs two hypotheses on the nature of composing: "Writing does not occur in a straightforward, linear fashion," and "the development of meaning through writing always involves some measure of both construction and discovery."[1]

Sommers, in her comparison of student writers and experienced adult writers, was concerned primarily with revision strategies. Utilizing the case-study approach, Sommers once again draws attention to the fact that for the inexperienced writer the composing process is a linear one while for the experienced writer the process is one of discovery: "Writing appears to be more like a seed than a line." She uses the notion of "dissonance" because she believes that the incongruities between intention and execution govern both writing and meaning. Since for experienced writers revision is recursive, it would not be difficult to include revision in the concept of planning. "During the first revision cycle their (experienced writers) attention is primarily directed towards narrowing the topic and delimiting their ideas."[2]

It would appear from reviewing the literature that in studying the cognitive behavior demonstrated in the process of composing, researchers are still attempting to define and describe with more partic-

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[1]Sondra Perl, "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing," Basic Writing, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980).

[2]"Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers", an article in Vol. 31 (XXXI) December 1980 of College Composition and Communication, pp. 378-388.

ularity the planning aspect of the composing process. Further, it would appear that composing aloud is a well-established technique by which to examine this particular aspect of the process. It also appears that few works have attempted to trace one or more aspects of the composing process through a group of increasingly proficient writers in order to note varying attention to those aspects. It is for all of these reasons that the investigator chose to engage in a comparative analysis of the planning consideration in the composing process, and to employ both case study and composing aloud as elements of the study's method and design.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND DESIGN

This study was conducted at the University of Oklahoma during the spring semester of the 1980-81 academic year. The University of Oklahoma is a state accredited and supported institution of higher learning with a cross-section of approximately 5,600 freshmen students. Of these students, approximately 3,500 were enrolled in freshman composition classes. Four program options are available to the freshman composition student, the options determined by the student's score on the English quartile of the American College Testing program examination (A.C.T.). The categories of proficiency based upon those scores are as follows: 0-17, "basic" freshman composition; 18-26, "regular" or "traditional" freshman composition; 27-30, "honors" freshman composition; 30-36, exempt from freshman composition. Employed to teach freshman composition classes are approximately sixty-five graduate assistants, lecturers, and instructors. Moreover, approximately fifteen individuals are employed by the University specifically for their skills as professional writers, several of whom publish as free-lance writers in addition to the work they do at the University.

To compare writers of increasing proficiency levels with respect to their planning activities in the composing process, the investigator selected at random five freshman composition students enrolled at the

time in composition courses, one writing teacher, and one professional writer. Furthermore, following Sondra Perl's recommendation, the freshman students were enrolled in the investigator's classes at the time of the research.[1] This decision was made to facilitate contact, voluntary participation, and the cooperative relationship essential to the completion of the case studies. It is difficult to establish the necessary rapport prerequisite to case study without this mutuality. As Perl noted, "I decided that these considerations outweighed the need to justify claims of 'objectivity.'"[2]

Of the fifteen professional writers, four agreed to form the population from which one would be selected at random. Of the sixty-five writing teachers in the English department, thirty were selected at random to receive invitations to participate in the research. Of these thirty, twelve agreed to form the number from which one would be selected at random. Of the ninety-one students enrolled in classes taught by the investigator, fifty-eight volunteered for the study. Of those fifty-eight, whose English quartile A.C.T. scores ranged from four to twenty-seven, forty-one students were identified as "basic" (according to the classification system employed by the University), fourteen were identified as "regular" or "traditional," and three were identified as "honors." From that group of fifty-eight potential subjects, five were selected at random: two "basic," two "regular," and one "honors."

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[1]Sondra Perl, "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing," Basic Writing, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980), p. 17.

[2]Ibid.

Each subject met with the investigator three times. At the first session, the purpose of the research and the concept of composing aloud into a recorder were explained. The student's writing history was also obtained during this initial session, although that history was in some cases reviewed during the post-taping interview. During the second session, each subject simultaneously wrote and composed aloud into a tape recorder on the following rhetorical problem: "Write an article for Parents magazine on the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children." The topic was selected because it provided the students could write without research. The topic was not discussed with them prior to the composing episode; it was, in fact, presented to them in a sealed envelope immediately before each subject composed. The student subjects wrote in the investigator's office on campus; the writing teacher and the professional writer were allowed to write at a place of their choice--a consideration which they insisted upon if they were to participate in the study. The investigator was not present during the composing process, but was available in a nearby office to monitor the termination of the composing period for the student writers. A time limit was neither suggested nor imposed. During a final interview, which in each case lasted approximately one hour, the subjects were interviewed about the writing episode and finished piece. Specific references were made during this session to the protocol, in addition to questioning about the planning concerns which the subjects evidenced during their composing episodes.

The first subject is "Joe," a basic student writer. The second is "Amy," also a basic student writer. Next are "Ken" and "Ted," respectively, both regular or traditional student writers. "Sue," classified as an honors student writer follows, with "Joy" as the writing teacher and "Liz" the professional writer. In accordance with recommendations from a representative of the Office of Research Administration at the University of Oklahoma, subjects' names are fabricated in order to comply with the University's "Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities."

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE STUDIES

Joe

Joe, a twenty-year-old black male, is a freshman with an English A.C.T. score of seven; this score resulted in his placement in a "basic" section of freshman composition. He met with the investigator for a pre-taping interview, during which they discussed the process of composing aloud into a tape recorder, as well as his background in writing. Joe's process of writing on the topic for this investigation lasted approximately thirty-five minutes, the protocol of which follows.

> I'm gonna turn this thing on and see if it works. I don't know what I'm doing . . . but you said just say everything I'm thinking and writing. I have a hard time thinking and writing at the same time. The biggest mistake parents make. Hmm . . . I'm not very good at this . . . but here goes.
>
> A parent don't give their children enough time . . . from day to day. Parents . . . uh . . . don't take time out to explain to their children . . . telling them the important things they should know. Instead, they let them go out and do things on their own. That the first mistake . . . but in this case parents are the blame. I think parents ought to sit down with children . . . from day to day . . . then they go out clear on what life is about. But in most cases children go out on their own and find out . . . the hard way. When they don't tell their child which road to take, they usually . . . go out on their own and find out. . . . They usually end up dead or severely hurt. Most parents today make this mistake. And when . . . no . . . yeah . . . when something happen to them they are always to blame. Parents should stop to think for a moment who are really to blame. When this happen, children usually end up hating their parent . . . when they are old enough they usually do. Parents still think they are . . . wrong. I knew a guy once who his parents never taught him anything . . . he had to go and find out the hard way. It was hard

> for him to be on his own because he had no tips on life. If parents put the paper and coffee down for a minute . . . and talk to their children . . . tell them a little something about life . . . we wouldn't have this problem . . . today. I think parents should always find time for their children. I . . . it . . . it would help them and their child. Now a conclusion . . . parent should always give their children a little attention, and give them a better understanding on life . . . instead of letting them go out on their own and find . . . it . . . the hard way.
>
> Well . . . that's it. That's all I have to say. That's the best I can do. I hope this is what you wanted me to do.

Joe produced a piece of writing almost identical to the protocol, one continuous paragraph in which words are chronically misspelled.

> "A parent don't give their give children eneoudt from day. parent don't take take out out to explain for thire children till telling then the important they should know. Instead they they let them go out and and do thire on their own. The that's first mistake they make. Sometimes they are not not the blame for children minsteak but in this case parents are the blame. I think parent out to sit down whith children frome day then out into those clear on what life is all about. But in most cases, children go out on their and find find out the hard way. When they don't tell tell ther child which road to take, they usuall go out on ther own and find out. They usally end up dead are sevrly hurt. Most in the today make this mistake, and when somethig happen to them the are arelways the blame. parents still think they are wrong. I knew a gu once who his parents never tagt him anything he had to go and find out the way. When is to trouble the laws and his parents though the blam on him but never took the time to show him which way to go a good life. It hard for him to be on his own because his had not tips on life. If parents put the papers, and coffee down for minet and take to their children. tell them a littil somethin about life. we wouldn't have this problem today. I think parent should alway find time for thir children. I it would help them and thir child. conclusion. parent should always give thir children a littil attention, and give then a better undersading on life. Instead of letting them go out on thir own and finding the hard."

The post-taping interview began with more discussion of Joe's background in writing, and then began to focus on the piece he produced.

Tell me something about your writing in high school again.

I went to a fairly big high school, but I don't remember much of what I did in English. I was in sports and we were gone a lot and I just never had to do much in English. I remember doing exercises a lot, but I don't think I ever had to write anything. Oh, one time we had to do a research, something on spending money on space program, but my girlfriend she did mine for me and I always passed the class.

And what about writing in college?

I have a lot of trouble writing. I really don't know anything about it and I just try to do whatever the teacher tells me to do. They talk about so much that I don't really know what they are talking about, except now I think I know what a thesis is.

What do you think a thesis is?

It means what you're writing about.

Do you ever do any writing at home? Like a letter to a friend?

Sometimes I make up a list or something I have to do, but when I need to talk to someone I just call them up on the phone.

What do you do when you have a school assignment that involves doing some writing?

Well, I write down what the teacher says to do and if it's something that comes from a book, like in history, then I read the book and try to repeat what the book says. If it's for English class, I go talk to my teacher and she usually gives me some ideas or helps me make an outline. She really doesn't help me make an outline . . . she makes the outline.

After you get the outline, then can you write the paper?

Yeah, usually. I just write down sentences that answer the questions she put in the outline. And then I always say 'in conclusion' when I'm ready to end it up.

How do you know when you're ready to end it up?

Well, I answered everything in the outline with at least one sentence or else I just can't think any more about it because I'm lost and so I just end it. Didn't you see in my paper when I wrote 'in conclusion'?

Yes, I saw that. In the essay you wrote for me, you didn't do much talking before you started writing, did you?

No, you said just to write down everything I was thinking and writing down.

What happened to the part when you were thinking?

Well . . . I just think and write at the same time.

How do you know where you're going if you don't think about it before you start?

I don't. I just write things down when I don't have an outline and that's the way I think and write at the same time.

Do you ever start a trip home and not know how to get there?

Of course not. I know which highway gets me there.

Did you ever think it might be that way in writing? That there are certain roads you could take which would help you know where to go, which turns to take, as you're trying to get the assignment done?

No, not really. That sounds funny. There aren't any directions or roads in a school paper.

Well, even though you say you didn't know where you were going, you built your paper around one idea--that the big mistake parents make is not spending enough time with their children. Did you know you were going to talk about that when you started?

Sure.

How did you decide, or why did you decide, to focus on that?

Because everyone I know who gets into trouble, they say it was because nobody ever talked to them.

You gave an example of a friend and how hard it was for him to be on his own with no one to talk to. Why did you decide to give this example?

Well, I didn't have anything else to say, and I thought it would make me stronger if I gave an example of somebody it really happened to.

Did it really happen, or did you just make it up?

Oh, it probably happened to someone I knew, but I didn't have anybody in special . . . special in mind. I just thought it would be more convincing, that you would believe me more if I said it happened to someone.

I also noticed that you wrote it all in one paragraph. Did you have a reason for doing that?

Well, I didn't much think about it at the time. It's just that I had only one thing, only one mistake, and it was all the same thing so there wasn't any reason to change. I thought you were supposed to change when you got started off on something else, and I just kept to the same thing the whole time, so I didn't have to.

What do you worry most about when writing a paper for school? Do you worry most about ideas, or about spelling and stuff like that?

Not either one, really. I just worry about getting it over with. I really don't like to write at all.

Joe saw this writing assignment the way he sees all writing assignments--as an ordeal, as a task which should be finished as soon as possible. Immediately after turning on the recorder, he looked at the topic and apparently thought of it as a question to be answered. The interview seemed to indicate that this is the only real planning strategy which he normally employs, the answering of questions on an outline drawn up by someone else.

Once Joe began to write words on paper, he wrote in a continuous fashion, producing what he thought to be the written versions of the words he was speaking. It is apparent from the variance between the

tape and the paper that he duplicated many words and attempted multiple spellings of others. His planning process did not appear to extend beyond the completion of the sentence which he was thinking about at the time he was writing it down. He extended certain sentences with an additional phrase, but he did not once reconsider an entire sentence or a phrase from a sentence he had already written down.

For Joe, the process of composing an essay on the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children was simple. He perceived his audience as being the investigator, and his concern was with finishing a piece, as soon as possible, which would be "what you wanted me to do." He did not consider limiting the topic, brainstorming possible ideas for the essay before settling on one, or assuming a writing persona other than that of himself giving a personal opinion, an answer to a question, "what is the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children?" He did not reread the essay once he had completed it, either for revision or proofreading. He determined that he was finished when he felt he had answered the question. For Joe, there is no sense of planning a piece of writing prior to putting words on paper--other than trying to answer a question, a process which he is concerned only about "getting it over with."

Amy

Amy is eighteen years old, black, a freshman with an English A.C.T. score of fourteen, which resulted in her placement into a "basic" section of freshman composition. She met with the investigator for a pre-taping interview, during which they discussed the process of composing aloud.

Amy's process of writing on the topic for this investigation lasted roughly two hours, an estimate derived from asking her how much time she spent writing after she turned off the recorder. The protocol of her composing aloud follows.

> Essay on biggest mistake parents make in bringing up their children. Um . . . I don't know that much about children. But my feelings on it . . . probably, especially in writing an essay, would be to point out the most important points that would help me write the essay. I'm going to write down some points on this piece of paper.
>
> The first thing I think would be . . . spoiling. Parents should not spoil their children. Sometimes their big mistake . . . how many children they have may have a lot to do with it. They can't learn to share. Some parents even give too much responsibility. I'll write that down. From the friends I know, they seem to have problems with their parents. Maybe it's not their fault. What I mean by too much responsibility, they allow the child to do more than they can do as a child. Maybe they leave them alone. You can't leave an eighteen year old alone, but by then they should know right from wrong but I know that from some friends of mine they start staying alone when they're fourteen or eight or something. Maybe they stay at a friend's or party when they're gone.
>
> What else . . . I mentioned spoiling. Sometimes that again is not the parents' fault. I have another friend who is an only child, but their parents have given them everything they want and what they want they think they should have. Grandma, I need $130, she'd probably get it.
>
> Getting back to the subject. I've written down spoiling, too many children, not enough responsibility. Some children have too much discipline. The child may learn to resent you and turn opposite of the way you want the child to turn out. Let me write that down, too. Discipline . . . not too much . . . this is a good one, not enough responsibility, they do everything for their children. The child doesn't have enough to do. The child doesn't really get to do anything he ought to do. He could be totally ruined once he encounters all the things in the cruel world. What else . . .
>
> Let's see . . . spoiling, discipline, too much, not enough. On each one of these, I can go either way. You can have

too many children and end up neglecting some of them. Or you can have not enough children and end up spoiling them. I had a friend who didn't get anything. She had to work for everything. It taught her a lot, but it also taught her to resent her parent. You can go either way on all of these. I had another friend--boy, I'll bet it sounds like I have a lot of friends--and she was slapping her mom around. I couldn't figure out who was the child and who was the mother.

Neglect. I'm assuming these parents aren't alcoholics or anything. They don't have any terrible problems or anything. I'm thinking of like neglect of love, not having their parents around enough. Let's see, what else . . . letting your parents or children see too much or know too much. It's good to expose the child to lots of things that will help them when they get into the world, but maybe you let them see it all too early. That would be a big mistake.

I'm getting a lot of little mistakes here, but I can't really think of one big mistake which all parents might make. Hm . . . than again, the children don't always have to . . .

Let's say, in the case of very young parents, eighteen and your mother is only sixteen years older than you are. You were born and she was a baby. She matured while you matured. It's hard to tell your child a lot of things if you haven't experienced them yourself. That could be a big mistake. Babies having babies. But it does happen. But then maybe that helps them start growing up . . .

Let's see . . . the biggest mistake parents make . . . probably having them. (laughter)

Hmmm . . . the children of wealthy parents may not want to be bothered with the kids and may send them off to boarding school. And that may be a mistake. That means to parents . . . the parents have missed giving them all the important information. A child can't learn how much you love him if he's in Switzerland. What good is all that money if you end up miserable? But what can you say? Sometimes I feel like wealthy parents only have children so they have someone to leave all that money to. What is the use? What IS the use?

I've hit on a lot of mistakes. I don't know if I've hit on the biggest mistake, but I think I've hit on a lot of

good points. From my own observance, the kid has it made if he's got parents he can talk to, and feels loved.

(she goes into a four-minute conversation about her parents' divorce)

Gosh . . . I haven't been writing too much here. Another mistake . . .

(extends remarks on parents' divorce)

Anyway . . . back to the subject. I'm trying to fill up your tape with ideas, but they don't seem to be coming. I had another idea a minute ago, but it seems to slip my mind. Well, I think this is pretty good, so I think I'll start writing now. I want to turn off the tape and start writing.

I've started by talking about the basic things a child needs--food, shelter, and love. And the need to create. And if you have these things, then . . . that's good . . .

(writes in silence)

I can't talk and write at the same time . . .

. . . if a child learns to respect her parents . . .

(turns off recorder)

Amy produced an essay which was impossible to compare to a tape filled with silence after her brainstorming process was completed. The piece involved three and one-half handwritten pages, single-spaced.

"First, I feel the necessities of the child should be reviewed. We as human beings need certain requirements, such as food, shelter, love, and a need to create. If the child is provided with all these requirements all is left is how the child grows and learns to respect her parents. Of course the child will develop a mind of her own more or less in the image of her parents. For instance if a child is spoiled by her parents it may have and adverse affect on her. Immature parents who make things worse by letting their child see too much and don't discipline them cause the biggest mistake a parent can make in rearing a child.

Immature parents can be a child's downfall in such a way that the child cannot be taught right from wrong if the

parents still are not sure which which! In these instances the child can learn to manipulate the parents and get her own way causing the child to cause her parents a lot of grief. The parents not really knowing right from wrong may find it hard to discipline their own child making the child even more difficult to cope with.

Discipline has to begin as soon as the child is brought home from the hospital. She is aware of her environment at this time. I'm not speaking of discipline as capital punishment, but as a means of creating respect in the child and letting them know who's boss. You must always keep in mind how much disciplining a child needs. She may only need a little in one situation, but in another situation she may need harsh disciplining always depending on the seriousness of the problem. Sometimes degrees of discipline on certain situations determine how much the child respects you. She may do something terribly awful, but if she is not shown this is bad and wrong she will not realize it the next time and may keep repeating the same problem over and over. She may be able to manipulate her parents and not listen to them at all making the situation unbearable for the parents. The child can manipulate merely observing the parents' weaknesses, in this the child has seen too much.

Children can see too much of their parents, especially, weaknesses the parents may have. There should always be a certain amount of distance between the child and parent. If the child learns how to control the parents by using their weaknesses all is lost. Children can also be exposed to too much in life. The parent may feel he is teaching the child something beneficial, yet in reality the child is really not mature enough to realize exactly the the parent wants her to, so experience is achieved from curiosity. The child wants to find out exactly what's going on. This could really tend to be disastrous. The child can't help curiosity and its is the parent's fault for stimulating this curiosity.

All in all, I feel the child's future and personality is determined by his parents so if there is any fault it is that of the parents for an unruly child. Of course parents blame everyone but themselves, but in reality the child is an image of his parents when they are truly responsible for their child."

The post-taping interview began with a discussion of Amy's background in writing, and then began to focus on the piece she had produced on the topic.

What do you remember about writing courses in high school?

Well, in my junior year, I had a teacher who was interested only in content. She didn't pay much attention to errors. It was a real switch when my senior teachers was so mechanical. She did talk a lot about thesis statement, though. I like to write and I always liked my English classes.

How about in college?

I have been real frustrated in my college writing except for in political science. When they grade for both content and stuff like that it gets harder. I didn't do as well in my English writing as I did in political science tests, even though the poly sci teachers also graded for mechanics and spelling. In English I had the ideas but I could never get them to go together right.

What about letters and things like that?

I write lots of personal letters. At least one or two a week. I proofread them and then change my ideas and I work a long time before they're ready to mail because I want my friends to think well of me.

Do you plan ahead of time or think much about what you're going to say in the letters before you write them?

Not really. I just start out and when I look them over later I take out stuff that isn't interesting or funny.

Do you plan ahead in writing for school?

I try to think about it ahead of time, but I never felt that I knew what I was doing. Although my teachers probably would not agree with this, I think vocabulary was my biggest problem. I knew what I wanted to say, but I just never could find the right words. It was a bigger problem than finding ideas.

I noticed you turned off the recorder once you really . . .

Well, I was through thinking.

But when you turned it off, you said you still didn't have a thesis statement. How could you be through with thinking?

I was ready to write, so I just got started. Even when I sit down and think in other papers, the paper never turns out like I want it to, anyway.

Did you ever consider writing the paper from the child's point of view?

No, I felt it was supposed to be oriented to the adult, and that it wouldn't be proper for me to write as a child. I had decided that it was an adult audience.

So how did that help get ideas?

I tried to think like a parent. I didn't get anywhere when I tried a personal point of view. Then I got confused about whether to write on one mistake or a whole lot of mistakes.

How much did you think about your audience, other than that they were probably adults?

I asked myself what kind of people would read this, and all I could think of was that they would be adults. That's as far as I got.

When you got confused about how many mistakes to include, what made you decide?

I sort of worked all the little mistakes into one big one.

You seemed very fluent when you were talking, but in the writing you sort of jumped from one idea to another. How did you decide what order to put your ideas in?

That was my big problem. When I was talking about it, I felt free, but when I started writing I felt trapped. I just did not know what order to put them in. That's why I tried to just work them all together.

Do you usually brainstorm a lot before you start?

Sure, but I doubt it really does much good in the long run. My problem has never been finding ideas, just putting them in some kind of order.

What made you decide it was time to stop writing?

> I thought I had covered enough, and I was tired of thinking. I was happy with it . . . well, I'm never really happy with it . . . but I kept running into dead ends and just quit.
>
> What did you think about composing aloud?
>
> I kept rewinding it and listening to what I had said because I kept forgetting what I had said. I was talking off the top of my head and then I would listen to see if it made any sense to me or if it would make any sense to you even though you said you just needed a record of what I was thinking as I wrote and that I wouldn't be graded on it or anything. After a while, I forgot about you and then I still got in the same mess. I felt I really had some good ideas, but I just didn't know how to put them together.

Joe saw the writing process as an order to hurriedly complete. Amy, on the other hand, began the process with energy and enthusiasm but felt she was becoming more and more "trapped" in a "mess" as she went about the process of producing an essay. She indicated in the post-taping interview that she thought about her audience as adults, but the protocol does not indicate attention to the stated readership. Amy stated the topic, and instantly began to brainstorm ideas and talk about them, developing each idea with examples from the lives of friends or from her own personal experiences.

She did not appear to consider the possibility of limiting the topic, although she did apparently decide that all of the "little mistakes" she brainstormed might somehow comprise a "big mistake." She easily drifted from the subject as she got involved in the details of the illustrations which occurred to her while she was brainstorming. The protocol indicates that she almost came upon a central idea of "finding a middle ground between extremes" as she commented to herself several times that she "could go either way on most of these ideas." The natural focal point did not develop, however, and she finally

determined that she had "hit on a lot of little mistakes and it's time to start writing." Once she had brainstormed and thought about several potential ideas, she apparently felt secure in the assumption that she would have enough to write about, and she began to relate the different ideas together, with little apparent logic or sense.

The freely-associative characteristic of her writing was perhaps best illustrated by her transitions between paragraphs. She began each paragraph with a link to the final sentence of the previous paragraph, "discipline" leads to "discipline" at the beginning of the next paragraph, just as "seeing too much" leads to "seeing too much" at the beginning of another subsequent paragraph. This, perhaps, indicates some sense of an internal plan, a plan to begin a paragraph by linking it to the final sentence of the previous one.

Since Amy turned off the recorder once she began to write, it is difficult to determine what kind of revisions based on planning considerations might have occurred. She indicated in the post-taping interview that she always went back and revised personal letters before mailing them. The piece she produced for this investigation does not appear to have been revised to any significant degree. Amy's planning of the piece she produced appears to have centered around an involved brainstorming process, followed by a composing process designed to link those several ideas together into a single paper. Amy herself indicated that she stopped writing because she felt she "had started running into dead ends and just quit." Amy analyzes her own composing problem as being problems with vocabulary, with "not having the right words to say" what she wants to express. Where Amy's

composing for this investigation is concerned, however, she indicated that her problem was having good ideas "but not knowing how to put them together." Her planning strategy where this specific piece was concerned seemed to focus on finding ideas and then trying to relate them to one another as she went about the writing of the essay.

Ken

Ken, a twenty-eight year old white male, is a freshman with an English A.C.T. score of eighteen, which resulted in his placement into a "traditional" section of freshman composition. He met with the investigator for a pre-taping interview, during which they discussed the mechanics of composing aloud into a recorder. A protocol of his composing aloud follows.

> Write an essay for Parents magazine on the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children. I don't have any children myself, but my wife and I have talked about this. Let's see . . . not concerned enough, not devoting enough time, especially while they're young. Not preparing for society, preparing them for outside of the home, teaching them the manners that they need. Uh . . . let me see. Parents definitely need to teach their children what they know. By that, I mean if a parent doesn't like blacks, then there's a good possibility that the children will not like blacks. Not liking neighborhoods, not liking certain things, just because their parents don't like them. Let's see. Forgetting that the little people depend on them all of the time. I guess in the beginning it's a real nice treat to have a new baby around the house, but when the novelty wears off, and they don't have enough time to do what they want to do. See . . . forgetting that the little people don't know anything, and losing patience with them sometimes, because of their curiousity. That's . . . uh, what else? The biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children. I also think parents spend too much time with their kids, pamper them, not enough freedom to do what they want to do. That leads to a lot of complications. Uh . . . let me see. Real good point, let me see . . . the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children. What children? what age? when do they stop being children and become young adults?
>
> (long pause)

You also have to take into account that the only kind of viewpoint I can give is my own. So what constitutes a mistake? How do you measure them? Who measures them? What are we talking about here, kids who shoot out lights in cars? Kids that just don't learn their ABC's? kids that aren't well-mannered, kids that start forest fires? What kinds of mistakes? Kids who become pregnant? or are those not kids anymore? It's time for me to put all these thoughts down on paper, sort them all out. Let me get this paper going.

(makes list)

Not devoting enough time in the first several years to development of proper attitudes. One, social. Two, moral. Three, parental prejudices. Four, impressionability. Five, dependence. Then there's forgetting about the curiosity which children have about everything.

On the other hand, devotion of too much time, not letting them have enough space for development. All things being relative, what constitutes a big mistake in rearing children? delinquency? crime rate? academic standings? by what measure shall a mistake in rearing be judged? Where does a child stop being a child and start being a young adult?

(looks at list and thinks)

Not enough time. Too much time. Damn near too close to separate. This should be the first question in the essay--what constitutes a mistake?

(begins draft)

Having been a former child myself, I consider myself . . . (marks out 'myself') somewhat of an expert on the subject. Hmmm . . . (begins to mumble the words he's writing) subject, not topic . . . we see all the faults, many of the faults (substitutes a phrase) the mistakes our friends with children are making.

(writes one full paragraph in silence, without alterations or revisions) for their offspring, for their offspring . . . for HIS or HER offspring, for THEIR children. It is this aspirational aspect which, aspirational aspect which . . . which . . .

(continues to write in silence)

Children derive . . . that basic . . . that children attain their attitudes.

(finishes remainder of essay without audible comment)

Okay, time to type the draft.

(takes out paper and retypes draft almost identical to first draft)

(reads entire paper aloud)

I hope this is okay. It sounds good to me.

Ken produced an essay of three and one-half typewritten pages when double-spaced. The final draft is almost identical to the original draft in longhand.

> "Having been a former child myself, I consider myself somewhat of an expert on this subject. Being married for three years also lends itself to my credibility. Conversations with my wife on this very topic have been both numerous and heated. Arguments have ensued on the 'spare the rod, spoil the child' side and with the 'physical adminishment is not necessary' on the other. Both philosophies have degrees of truth to them. Although we have no children of our own, we both see many of the mistakes our friends with children are making. In preparation for the time in our lives when my wife and I will have to share our relationship with our own 'little people,' we have agreed on a few basic ideas of which I shall now try and explain.
>
> We agree that all parents should, and most do, want the best for their children. But what constitutes the best is established by the aspirations of the parents in the beginning. Would it be adequate for the children to be better off than the parents, if that meant no more than the children having a roof over their heads, or would the best be described as the children becoming the leaders of tomorrow? The spectrum between the two ideals covers everything parents could desire for their children. It is this aspirational aspect which leads the parents in their molding of the children in their early years. There are those of us who would like to give the children their own option on the future, by exposing them, within reason, to as much as possible of all things which may effect them during their early opinion making years.
>
> Knowing that the first several years of a childs life are the most crucial in attitude formation, my wife and I agree that, by our standards, this is the area in which most parents make their biggest mistakes in rearing their children.
>
> Children derive all that they believe in and all that they know to be true from those experienced souls who protect,

nurture, and lead them when they are young. It is through this guidance that children attain their basic attitudes. Parents are responsible for either passing on their own prejudices or for presenting both sides of a situation to their children. Be being conscious of their own slanted perceptions, or the possibility that they may be slanted, parents may guide their children through a decision making process in which the parents themselves may experience an understanding. Racial prejudice is the most prominent of passed on attitudes that comes to mind. An example of this is one of my second cousins, who when confronted with the prospect of a vacation in the Bahamas, adamantly declared his repulsion of the idea because there were too many Niggers on the island. Even though he had never been there he immediately turned to his Father for confirmation of what he had said. His Father agreed with him and suggested another vacation area. My wife and I find it hard to believe that attitudes like that can flourish in the twenty-first century, when mankind shall be much closer and more exposed than now.

Understandably, children seek the praise of their parents just as we adults seek the accolades of our own sphere of friends. Everyone knows that children are impressionable, but how many times have parents been embarrased when their children would say something that was overheard in a conversation by them? Just as we expect all others to know the difference between right and wrong, as we percieve it, we are still surprised when something we said is repeated out of text: 'I didn't mean it that way' or "Where did you ever get an idea like that' are usually the responses of such confrontations. It all stems from the mimicry which children employe towards their parents: "After all, if Mother and Father say that, then it must be true.'

We have also seen times in which parents have become 'fed-up' with their children. The parents demand time of their own and become short tempered with the very creations they were responsible for bringing into the world. This is when the 'children should be seen and not heard' concept comes into play. When the tempers grow short and the voices become loud a lack of control is evident. We believe that time should be managed to that all individuals are allowed to breathe. No one in his or her right mind could expect to be couped up with anyone or anything for a long period of time without having a break. A chance of scenery is necessary to put all things in perspective.

Children have an unquenchable curiosity about all things. We have seen times when parents ignore this and pawn off the explanations as 'because I said so.' A childs curiosity

is undaunted until an acceptable explanation is understood. It is at times like this that the compassion of memories should serve to show us that this is a natural function as opposed to an attention getting or anatagonistic approach by the child. Answers are all they are after and if parents cannot find time to respond, the children are affected in a myriad of ways. Not undertanding the parents reactions, the children may think they have offended their parents by asking questions. It is the parents responsibility to make the childrens curiosity a healthy environment for growth instead of oppression.

If, as I stated in the beginning, we want the best for our children, we must understand that the learning, teaching, and understanding process is not a nine to five job, but a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly task that must be endured, and hopefully enjoyed, until the children have reached an age and state in which they can deal with the problems of life on their own, with occasional help from their friends--their parents."

The inverview after the composing session dealt with the same issues discussed with Joe and with Amy.

Where have you been, if you're twenty-eight and a freshman?

In the Air Force.

Do you do any writing while there?

Yes, I wrote performance reports, took care of training records, and did some technical writing.

Did you enjoy that kind of writing?

It was pretty formulated, fill in the blank type stuff except for the technical writing, which was classified.

What do you remember about writing in high school?

I had two different teachers. In one class, we did all creative writing. In the other we did a lot of business writing. And some research reports. The business-type teacher was big on mechanics. The creative writing teacher didn't care at all.

What kind of writing have you done in college?

Mostly essays, like description or narration, or comparison in English. In history, I've had essay questions.

Do you do much writing that's self-initiated?

I write quite a few business letters and I also take notes. Mostly in the diary form for a book I would like to write some day.

Did you like the academic kind of writing?

I enjoy it very much. I do a lot of rereading and revising though, because it represents me and I want to look good, so I never really feel satisfied with my writing. I always wish I had more time and that's the only thing I don't like about classroom writing, too many deadlines. Having to do it also takes away the creativity, the fun.

On the piece you wrote for me, you decided to approach it as is related to you personally. Is this the way you generally approach a topic, or do you ever pretend to be someone else?

I always write from my point of view. Always personal.

In what way were you affected by the fact that the piece was to be written for a specific magazine?

Not much. I don't know anything about these people other than I assume they are either parents or are thinking about being parents.

So you didn't think about what KINDS of parents might buy that magazine?

No, it never occurred to me.

Before you started writing, you brainstormed some ideas. Is this the way you usually do before you begin to write?

Normally, no. Usually, I think about what I'm going to write while driving down the street or drinking a beer and so I know where I'm going when I sit down to write.

Why did you brainstorm this time?

Because I didn't have time to think about it. I didn't know what the topic was until I opened the envelope and there wasn't time to let the topic settle in for me to think about it.

When you were actually writing, it sounded as though you had turned off the recorder. Why?

Because I didn't want anyone listening to me when I was thinking. That's an invasion of privacy. Having that tape on invaded the aura of thought process. I didn't like it at all.

Do you usually make few changes of a first draft?

Usually I've thought it through so much that I know what I want to go with when I begin.

How much time do you typically spend planning a piece before you begin to write?

I think about it longer than I spend writing it. But I'm never happy with what I do. I always wish I had spent more time in the actual writing.

Are you usually dissatisfied with a piece? I mean, do you think they don't turn out like you intended them to?

I don't really know. I think I have it down in my mind and then I can't quite seem to build the bridges to get from where I started to where I want to be. I think about it so much that it all makes perfect sense to me, and I forget that my reader doesn't know everything I've thought about. I guess in my planning I forget about the bridges.

Did you ever think about limiting the topic of this piece?

I talked about that, didn't I? I tried to limit it by saying 'in my opinion' . . .

How about a limit like 'one of the biggest mistakes'?

Well, that wasn't my business. You're the one who made up the topic and I assumed I couldn't change it. And besides, I thought I was limiting when I narrowed it just to my opinion. I narrowed it in my mind, but I didn't feel it was necessary to change what you had given me. You're the teacher and who the hell am I to change it?

What made you decide when the piece was finished?

When I didn't want to write anymore, and when I was tired. That always signals to me that I'm through, and that I've done all that needs to be done.

You don't check to see if you've accomplished what you intended to do?

Not really, I can always tell by when I'm tired. I know it's time to finish when I don't have anything else to say.

What did you think of the composing aloud?

I was uncomfortable with it. I was self-conscious about being recorded. I was running the risk of having someone--you, I guess--hear what was going on before I was finished with it.

Ken is confident of himself as writer. He produced a lengthy piece, certainly in comparison to the pieces produced by Amy and Joe. His initial planning activity, in fact, is quite simlar to Amy's. He began to brainstorm ideas almost instantly, and this listing of potential problems in childrearing occupied the vast majority of his pre-writing time. He did not concern himself with the stated audience within the topic. He did not truly discuss limiting the topic, even though he did begin to question it near the end of his brainstorming period, and even though he claimed in the interview that he had a sense of limiting the topic by stating his arguments as personal opinions. He began to question the broadness of the topic, but apparently saw such thinking as some kind of diversion from the stated task, and almost immediately indicated "time to get this paper going." It appears that Ken saw his reservations about the topic to be another encroachment on the investigator's prerogative. He does, however, plan to indicate limits to the topic early into the piece, and he carries out that plan when he questions, "what constitutes a mistake?"

After that limitation, plus the limitation which he felt he indicated by stating that his ideas were only opinions, his composing plan consisted of covering, in the sequence in which they were listed, all of the brainstormed "mistakes" which parents might make in rearing their children. Ken indicated in the interview that it "never occurred" to him to tailor the piece for a specific readership of a popular magazine. He suggested

in the post-taping interview that he always knows where he wants to go with a piece of writing, but it never seems to get there, "because I forget about the bridges." He said that he would prefer to spend more time writing than planning, but that he usually lacks the time to do both. For Ken, much as for Joe and Amy, a piece of writing is finished when the writer runs out of things to say, or becomes tired from the process of composing. Like Joe and Amy, he did not consistently compose aloud as requested. For Ken, such a request is "an invasion of my thinking aura."

Joe saw writing as a laborious task. Amy saw writing as something enjoyable until the "mess" developed. Ken saw writing as the process of brainstorming ideas, transforming each idea into a paragraph of text, and then ending when he had nothing else on his list of ideas. The final draft evidenced almost no revision, Ken "knowing where I want to go before I ever start writing."

Ted

Ted, a white male, eighteen years of age, has an English A.C.T. score of twenty-two; he is in a "traditional" section of freshman composition, as a slightly-above-average student. Ted was the first of the subjects to compose aloud as requested. The protocol of his composing follows.

> OK, let's see . . . the biggest mistake that parents make in rearing their children. Okay, let's try to list it. Okay, I think the biggest mistake parents, MY parents, have made is probably overprotectiveness, but I don't think that's the WORST thing a parent could do . . . it shows their love . . . hmmm . . . how about not being demonstrative. Okay, that's a good one . . . not demonstrative . . . here we go.

Topic sentence time . . . T.S. time . . . I think . . . okay, if I'm saying it, it's obviously my opinion, so that's silly, so I'll just say the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children is the lack of demonstrative their trus . . . true? . . . feelings. Sounds like crap. Well, it's good enough for me. This is a stupid topic, sounds like something in a psychology class or something.

As children grow up they, their parents are usually the core of their existence . . . this is no good . . . the parents . . . opinions, feelings, what else is there? let's see . . . well, I'll just stick an 'and' in there. Their parents' opinions and feelings are important to them.

The child's . . . oops, I've slipped into singular here . . . the child's personality, outlook on life . . . God! what a piece of foolishness . . . and self-opinions . . . is that a word? (gets out a dictionary and checks) self, self-addressed, self-defense, self-evident, self-knowledge . . . Okay, I'll use that . . . self-respect.' That's it! Self-respect are originated . . . originated? are derived? are begun? in his household. This is so hideous. In his atmos . . . in his home. I'll go with that for now.

If a child's parent criticizes or seems to dislike . . . or criticizes the child, the youth . . . blech! . . . often believes he is somehow unworthy of love. I don't like that sentence at all. (deletes it)

A child needs his parents' approval, assurance, and love in order to gain a better understanding of himself. I've used the word 'child' too many times. offspring? No thank you. A child becomes an individual . . . a child understands his own identity through his parents' eyes. Therefore a parent who loves his . . . who shows . . . their love for their . . . his love for his . . . offspring? Okay, child . . . is helping the child to form his own self-opinion . . . is that a word? Is also helping the child to gain self-knowledge.

Okay, time to summarize. Overall, through a parent's love, children learn to love themselves (takes a dramatic tone for the effect) and love of oneself is that all-important step in learning how to love life. Oh, this is going to be great!

(rereads entire paragraph and makes a few additions in silence)

(Ted then rereads each sentence, connecting each to the topic sentence with the word 'because.') Oh, that one doesn't fit. Oh well, it's the support for the previous one. Personally,

I don't like this. Okay . . . unity. Unity is okay. Coherence. Need key word repetition and transitions. Okay, check the verbs to see that they have the right tense and number.

Okay, now pretend you just picked up this magazine . . . Oh boy, an article on the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children . . . after all, I am expecting . . . (rereads whole piece assuming voice of reader) Well, how interesting! Yes, that's the way it was for me, when I was a child. Isn't this a sweet article?

Ted produced a single paragraph for his "article" for Parents magazine.

"The biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children is the lack of demonstrating their true emotions. As children grow up, their parents are usually the core of their existence. Their parents' opinions and feelings are important to them. Often the child's personality, outlook on life, religious convictions, and self-respect are begun in his home. A child needs his parents' approval, assurance, and love in order to gain a better perception of himself. A child understands his own identity through his parents' eyes. Therefore, a parent who shows his love for his child is also helping the child to gain self-knowledge. Overall, through a parent's love, children learn to love themselves, and love of oneself is the all-important step in learning to love life."

In the interview which followed the composing session, the investigator immediately focused upon the length of the piece.

I noticed that, in your opinion, the essay was finished at the end of one paragraph. Where did you get this standard?

I almost always write a page and a half or less. Mostly all I've ever had to write was a paragraph. Sometimes the teacher cleverly justifies them as 'single-idea essays.' Other than short paragraphs, all I've ever written is the standard three-paragraph theme. You know, first paragraph, central idea. Second paragraph, development. Third paragraph, conclusion. I hate those things. Totally uncreative. It also gripes me that the really stupid kids do much better on them than I do.

Well, I was going to ask you about your writing experiences, but perhaps that covers it.

Not really. I'm very critical of myself as a writer. I have absolutely no confidence in myself as a writer, either. In grade school I did, but once I got to ninth grade, there was always something wrong. It was never right. I'd get back a paper with absolutely nothing written on it but the grade--a B--at the top. The papers I read which got A's seemed to me to be real stupid and artificial, but I'm no dummy, so I started doing them that way, too.

Do you think what you wrote for me sounds artificial?

It sounds stupid! Like the writer didn't even think. But I guessed it was the kind of thing a reader of the magazine would like, short and incredibly sweet.

You thought about the proposed reader, didn't you?

I felt like I had to do that . . . as if it were somehow the ultimate test to see if what I had written sounded right. That was fun. Usually, we don't have an identified reader like that. I felt like I ended up manipulating it at the end, it wasn't for the teacher, but for some goody-goody parent type. I thought what I said was crap, just the specific kind of crap that a parent who read such a ridiculous magazine might like.

When you have to write something, what kind of planning do you do?

Usually, I'm not given the topic . . . but if I get the topic from the teacher, then I start by brainstorming ideas to write about. I usually work through what I'm going to say in the actual process of writing it. I always set a deadline for myself for starting, and the only times I think about a theme in advance of the deadline is if I'm just bored.

Don't you think about what you're going to say, in advance?

Well, sometimes I outline a little, but what I try to concentrate on is revising as I go, making sure that all of the words sound right, that they're all spelled correctly, that I haven't got pronoun faults or verb disagreements. You know, all the stuff you guys like to mark in red.

What about watching the direction a piece is going AS you write it?

> The important thing is that you don't make any major mistakes. What you end up being graded down on is the mistakes, not what you have to say. You could write crap like I wrote and as long as it has no mistakes, you'll get a much better grade than if you write some brilliant insight that's just filled with misspelled words and fragments.
>
> Hmmm . . . what did you think about the recorder, about composing aloud?
>
> Didn't like it at all.
>
> Did you "play" to the tape . . . just a little?
>
> Sure. (smiling)

Ted faced the writing task by immediately brainstorming and making a list. As soon as he found what he considered to be an acceptable central idea, he began to write. According to the interview, the issue is how many mistakes one makes in writing, not what one has to say. As soon as Ted came upon a controlling idea, planning was completed and he simply wrote until he finished. Writing, for Ted, was a task to be dealt with efficiently, and at 127 words, he was "finished."

All in-progress planning centered around error prevention. Ted evidenced no revision concerns other than adhering to standards he felt might be important to a teacher. He did, however, seem to be concerned about audience, even though he did not mention the proposed reader until he had finished the piece. When he completed the paragraph, he reread it, pretending to be what he assumed a Parents reader might be like, making comments about how interesting the "article" was.

Ted produced a piece of writing which is not good, even though it is free from mechanical error, and Ted knows it. For him, however, the process of composing is the process of producing what he conceives of as

being bad writing. The protocol of his composing session is filled with ongoing remarks about "how awful" the piece is, but to Ted formula-produced and formula-evaluated writing is just what the teacher ordered. Like Joe, Amy, and Ken, writing is a task to be finished as soon as possible. Joe does not like to write; Amy becomes lost when writing; Ken makes a list and stops when he has covered it; Ted sees "essays" and articles" as "totally uncreative," the process of producing writing which will be considered adequate if it is void of mechanical error.

Sue

Sue is nineteen years of age, white, a freshman with an English A.C.T. score of twenty-seven. Such a score would justify placement in an "honors" section of freshman English, but scheduling difficulties resulted in her placement into a "traditional" section. Sue met with the investigator for a pre-taping interview, during which they discussed the process of composing aloud into a recorder. Sue's composing for this investigation lasted approximately one hour and fifty minutes, an estimate derived from the duration of the tape. A protocol of Sue's composing session follows.

> Okay . . . topic. Essay for Parents magazine on the biggest mistake parents make in raising their children. Okay, how the hell am I supposed to know what the biggest mkstake parents make in raising their children is? It assumes that there is a biggest mistake, biggest single mistake, and I don't believe that's true.
>
> I wish I had an amusing anecdote or something to tell, because I can't think of any. See . . . how to begin to approach this topic. Oh, God . Maybe if we began with some kind of question like . . . uh . . . let's see . . . you know, something like since why is it that since all of us have been children during our lives and have that experience, why don't we become better parents. I think

all people go into parenthood planning on being better parents than their parents were.

At some point, since I'm not a doctor or a psychiatrist, or even a parent, I'm going to have to justify why I'm writing this essay in the first place. I could, conceivably, I guess, go about it from the point of view of a teacher. But I don't want to bring something hokey into the essay. I think most of the readers might resent teachers because they act like they know more about the kids than the parents so. I'm going to try to work my way through it . . .

(writes)

Okay, first words on the page. Know what I've got? The title.

(writes again)

Introduction is going to be something like a running series of statements, of complaints that most people had about their parents. Some contradictory. Maybe all contradictory. They gave me too much freedom, they gave me too little freedom, they interfered with my life too much, I wasn't given enough attention, something else. I had too little discipline. No, I don't like that. They punished me unjustly, no, take that out, they had too many rules. And I had too little discipline.

If I start with something like that, then I had better plan on having some kind of transition. What might it be? I could say something like these statements must sound familiar to you, but I don't want to do that because it sounds corny. Ah--something to tie them all together. Let's try something else, something like when I'm a parent I'm going to do things differently. That would work well. It's consistent with the basic introductory quotations device, and it also follows into the plan of the paper--that children intend to become parents unlike their own.

At this point I need another cup of coffee. (pause) You know, I really don't want to write this essay in the first-person, but I have a sneaking suspicion that the obnoxious little pronoun 'I' will creep into it someplace.

I need to change 'had' to 'received.' I'm writing again. I've tried to create the kind of transition that I wanted, something about how familiar are these . . . but I don't like it . . . I'll replace it with one of . . . at least one of . . . at least one of the above statements followed by when I'm a parent I'm going to do things differently.

I want to use 'gonna' instead of 'going to' had been uttered by all of us at some point in our lives. Some people once told me that people tend to make the same mistakes their parents made, but I can't remember where I got that, and so I don't know if it's a qualified remark, so I can't use it in the essay. I really don't know if it's true. It sounds good, though. (pause) Too bad.

(writes without comment, the silence lasting almost fifty five minutes, with one audible "I need another cigarette" near the very end of the time)

(Sue turns over the tape and reads the entire draft aloud)

Final comment. I consumed two cups of coffee and half a pack of cigarettes while writing this essay. This is not, however, the way I write. I usually don't brainstorm, despite what I've been told. If I write down a list or a series of ideas, it usually blocks my ideas from developing more than anything else. The ideas do a lot better if I just write and watch it develop. For example, the idea of using a series of statements came to me as I was writing, not before. What I usually do is, whenever I'm given a topic to write about, no matter how long it takes, depending on what kind of deadline I've got, I carry around a notebook with me and when ideas creep in, I write them down and then go back and look at them. The most crucial element to me is trying to develop a concept in advance of how you're going to write the paper. The instructions in this case were not to open the envelope with the topic in it until I got ready to write. Well, if I were really demonstrating what I actually do, I'd have a tape recorder carried around with me in my purse for four or five days and maybe there'd be three things on four days of tape that had anything to do with the paper. Most of them probably wouldn't be on the tape anyway, since they're unconscious.

The big thing to me, at least as far as I write goes, is to put something down and see if you can go anywhere with it. If you can't, put something else down--maybe then, maybe later--and see what kind of paper you can develop from it. I want to know where I'm going and how I'm going to get there before I write a draft by extending some initial sentences. Once I've got the plan, I really DON'T talk to myself or anything else. It's unconscious. The concept I have in mind when I start is simply programmed into me like an architectural drawing that occurs to me once I look down the road from the initial sentences, and I simply follow it from there. Okay?

Sue produced seven paragraphs, written in longhand on half-sized sheets of single-spaced notebook paper. Comparing the final draft to the first draft indicates minor revisions, primarily substitutions and deletions, no significant additions.

> "They gave me too much freedom . . . too little freedom . . . they interfered in my life too much . . . I wasn't given enough attention . . . they had too many rules . . . I received too little discipline. At least one of the above statements followed by 'when I'm a parent, I'm gonna do things different' has been uttered by all of us at some point in our lives.
>
> When I'm a parent . . . Why is it that we do not seem to learn from our parent's mistakes? Why is it that all of us are not better parents having been through the universal experience of being a child? Didn't our parents share the high aspirations we have? Didn't they also want to be ideal parents? Where did they go wrong? Where are we going wrong? Perhaps, the problem lies with the high expectations we have of ourselves and, therefore, of our children. At some point children will betray all of your good intentions--while you are striving to be a perfect parent, they are not simultaneously striving to be perfect children.
>
> Unfortunately, there are no absolute rules for the proper care and feeding of children. If there are no absolute 'how to's,' than likewise, there are no absolute 'how not to's.' Assuming that there are absolute rules is probably the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children. Preconceptions are always dangerous because a preconception of who you will be as a parent implies some kind of preconception of who your child will be. The problem, more simply put, is that many parents do not know their children. They suffer from parental myopia. They see only an idealized version of their child and not who their child really is. If the child has shortcomings, perhaps it would be better to change the mold than to whack off an idiosyncrasy here and a personality trait there in an attempt to make a square peg fit a round hole.
>
> Why isn't my son doing better in school? Maybe your son isn't that bright. Maybe C's are the best that he is capable of. If this is true, it would be more beneficial to help him explore other talents than to point out that both his parents have I.Q.'s of 140 and he is genetically a straight-A student.

> Why isn't my daughter more popular? I had more dates than I could handle when I was her age. Maybe your daughter is shy. It would be better to let her develop at her own pace than to reinforce her insecurities by asking why she doesn't have a date for the fifth Saturday night in a row.
>
> His teachers have a grudge against Junior. He's always been a model of deportment at home. Well, chances are that Junior's teachers are not suffering from delirium tremens. Maybe Junior misbehaves at school because he knows his parents will rush to his defense like the United States defending a third world nation from the Red Menace. Don't wait until Junior burns the school down before admitting that maybe liberal parenting isn't working and it's time for some old-fashioned discipline.
>
> In order to be a good parent, you must accept the fact that almost nothing you do will be right. Parenting is a hit and miss proposition. Do not attempt to rear your children the way you would like to have been reared. Do not view your children as an extention of yourself. A good parent must be flexible. A good parent must be able to adapt to the child's personality. As a parent, the most you can do for your children is love them. But you cannot love a Playdoh doll or a work of art. You cannot love something that you do not know."

The post-taping interview began with a discussion of Sue's background in writing, and then focused on the specific piece she produced for the investigation.

> Sue, what do you recall about your writing experiences in high school?
>
> Well, I did a lot of writing in high school. Probably because I went to a private school. Well, a Catholic school, and we had to do a lot of written composition work in all of the classes not just English classes. My high school English teachers were quite good, as were the math teachers, too. I think that's why I've always done well on standardized tests, probably.
>
> What kind of composition instruction did you have?
>
> Well, the ninth grade class was exclusively grammar. The sophomore class was short stories and writing analyses of them. Junior year was British literature and papers, mostly taught the standard, technical, five-paragraph

theme way. The senior year was nothing but composition. Oh, there was some vocabulary study, too, but mostly just composition of papers.

And college?

Well, freshman English. I should have tested out, or at least gotten into another section, maybe a film course or something, but I enrolled late and couldn't get into one. What I ended up with was okay, mind you, but I really didn't learn all that much that I didn't already know. The course I got more out of was my journalism class. I liked the writing of feature articles, starting with a generating statement or something and developing a piece by extending it. I liked the way that kind of writing seemed to have an orderly systematic approach to it, rather than the free-for-all which seems to dominate regular English classes. I like having assigned topics, with a stated audience.

Well, this one had a stated audience. To what extent did you adapt what you had to say for the Parents readership?

I didn't adapt it as much as I normally would have. I felt like this was something I needed to do according to the instructions. You remember when I commented at the end of the tape that I would usually do more thinking about a topic like this before I started writing? Well, in this case, I couldn't, I had to produce the piece once I turned on the recorder. It bothered me that I had nothing other than personal opinion to present, since I had done no research or anything. That's why I tried to make it a layman's piece rather than a technical or scientifically-sound document of some kind. I assumed, of course, that the readers would be parents, and that's all I felt like I could use.

Did you think about limiting the topic at all?

Oh, I was really bothered by that 'biggest' word. I found it hard to comply with that.

I noticed that you got to a thesis statement in the middle of the third paragraph . . .

Right. It sort of creeped up on me. As I was writing, I seemed naturally to drift toward the discovery that making absolute rules was probably the biggest mistake. Since I could find no apparent absolute rules as I was writing, I decided . . . well it actually wasn't a decision, it

was sort of a natural outgrowth of the writing . . . that this may well be the biggest of the mistakes.

You worked a long time on the introduction, and then the rest of the composing session seemed to go from there.

Yep. That's the way I like to do these things. All I need to do is find something I can extend from, and then find a way to link it transitionally to the body of the paper. It all seems to flow from there. Now, normally, I would like to know where the paper is going in advance, but in this case, I sort of realized where I was going as I actually wrote. I did the opening quotations and then the link, and the I eventually got back to more of the quotations from the parent point of view. It just seemed logical to do it that way. I don't think it was a conscious decision. I've written so many things like this, that it's almost a formula.

What happens if you get into a piece and don't like the way it's going?

I go back and either start over, or look . . . no, really I usually don't have that problem at all. Usually, I know what I'm going to do before I start writing. This was an exception to the rule, as it were. Since you had said you wanted me to try to write and think the way I normally do, I did the best I could to show you what I normally do, even though I didn't have the chance to think about the topic in advance.

You said you don't talk to yourself when writing . . .

Right . . .

Well, do you ever read a sentence or a paragraph after you've written it? You know, just to see how it sounds?

No, I think that's a big mistake. I think you should write a whole piece and then examine it for its overall logic and . . . oh, what do you call it . . . coherence. I don't think you get there by rereading each sentence just to see if it sounds like you want it to. The overall piece is more important than any individual sentence. The question is do the sentences all link together into a total package, not is each sentence okay. I think that all that rereading is actually a bad thing to do.

What did you think of composing aloud?

> Obviously not much. I thought it was something which detracted from my concentration. I kept thinking about how I wasn't saying enough. But, you know, once I really started writing, I got so involved in it that I didn't even notice that I was not talking. That's really why I went back at the end and tried to give you some ideas about what I had been doing. I hope I gave you something you could use.

Sue began her composing session by stating the topic and almost immediately analyzing its assumptions, that there is a single, biggest mistake parents make. She did not appear to consider limiting the topic, but instead readily began to employ what she suggests to be a standard composing plan--generate some initial sentences from which she might extend into an overall piece of writing. She discussed point of view briefly before she began, rejecting the idea of assuming a persona other than her own, and rejecting one particular idea because she felt it lacked expert credibility. While she made no specific reference to audience analysis, she indicated in the interview that she assumed her audience would be one comprised of parents, that the piece should be directed toward them. This, she indicated, was the reason why it appeared logical to her to extend upon the idea of quotations or complaints, shifting near the end of the piece to the parental point of view.

Her planning strategies beyond the overall plan seemed to be concerned with in-process plans for the subsequent developmental paragraph. She completed the introductory remarks in her introduction and them immediately commented that she "needed now to plan a transition" into the body of the piece. At one point before really beginning to compose, she referred to the "plan of the paper--that children plan on being

parents unlike their own." By the middle of the third paragraph of text, she had diverted from that "plan" for a thesis, and had shifted to "thinking there are absolute rules" as the biggest mistake parents make. She suggested in the interview that this was a natural outgrowth from the two paragraphs which preceded the appearance of a thesis.

She was the first of the subjects to think in journalistic terms, in terms of deadlines and such. She indicated in the interview that she had found her writing instruction and practice in journalism coursework to be more helpful than what she had learned in standard English classes. It is from practice in journalism classes, according to Sue, that she learned the "overall programme" of "initial sentences" which lead to a "logical architectural plan" for a piece of writing. Sue believes this type of planning to be unconscious, preconceived. She suggested that such a general writing plan would always be employed by her, that the only difference between her normal composing process and the process demonstrated in her tape was that she would ordinarily have more material to work with, and would ordinarily know where the "initial sentences" would lead her. In her opinion, however, as long as you generate "initial sentences" and let them logically direct themselves, a "natural architectural plan" will fall into place unconsciously.

Joy

Joy is a white female, thirty-five years of age, who holds a masters degree in English and is employed as a writing teacher. She met with the investigator and they discussed the process of composing aloud into a recorder. She was familiar with the technique and the lengthy protocol of her composing session follows.

Wow, oh, wow. How did I get into this? The hardest thing for a writing teacher to do is to write, because we talk about it a lot, but it's . . . uh . . . hard to put all of that into practice. If I didn't know you were desperate, I wouldn't do this at all, but . . .

Okay, the biggest mistake that parents make in rearing their children. An article for Parents magazine. As I remember, that's a slick-backed thing you put on your coffee table when your babies are small, to make you look good as a parent, because you don't feel confident enough to do it all by yourself. This is the age of experts. We use experts for everything, don't rely on our intuitions at all. So I think when you consider your audience you have to think primarily of conscientious young mothers, because the fathers are too busy off being wage-earners to think about the children. Child-rearing is still pretty much a maternal concern. And if your children look good, then so do you. So, if you can say 'well, I read it here or I was told this or the book said to do this' you don't feel all alone in this awesome venture.

But, my goodness, what is the biggest mistake. There are thousands of mistakes. And uh . . . what children? babies? preadolescents? fifteen-year-olds? six-year-olds? You've got a big span there. One month to, say, eighteen or twenty-one, and the first thing I tell my students when they gather information or brainstorm is narrow your topic, narrow your topic. Nothing like this . . . get something you can handle. You can't say THE biggest mistake. I could say ONE of the biggest mistakes. And, in rearing children, I think, I would limit that to a specific age group. And, un . . . not as a writing teacher, but as a mother, I should write on the age group with which I'm most familiar. The age group of . . . say, thirteen to fifteen, that time when they're not small children anymore but they can't drive a car so they can't get away from you, you're still very involved in their lives, primarily because of the transportation factor.

So the first thing I would do, or that I would tell a class, is to narrow that topic. Narrow it to ONE of the biggest mistakes parents make in . . . rearing teenagers . . . or young teenagers. And then you have to worry about what that is. And you have to remember who your reader is . . . who you're writing for . . . for young, conscientious mothers who have the time and energy to go out and buy a slick-backed magazine. So as far as I know anything about it, you're writing for the middle-class, maybe upper-middle class, white mother. Uh . . .

got to decide how long the article needs to be, so I need to know how many facets of the information to cover. If a person is a writer who writes all the time, this sort of decision would be no problem, but a student writer has no way of knowing it intuitively, so what I tell my students, even if it is a little mechanical, is to plan on four or five sentences per paragraph, eighteen to twenty words per sentence. Let's say six paragraphs . . . so let's say I'm writing a five hundred word essay, maybe three solid paragraphs, something at the beginning and some sort of conclusion.

But, gosh, who wants to hear an over-the-hill English teacher talk about mistakes parents make in rearing children? I have to have something to back me up. I'm no expert . . . (pause) unless . . . it's true confession time, personal narration or something, pay attention to me, I have a mother's true confession of how she survived her children's early teenage years. Personal point-of-view. I always tell them that you have to have a sense of where you're going before you start, so where is my purpose. (pause) My purpose is to tell young mothers who read the magazine that here's one of the pitfalls to avoid in rearing young teenagers.

What method shall I use? Exposition wouldn't carry any real weight, since I'm not an expert. Shall I think of something I've heard from a friend, or just get down to the nitty-gritty and explain some mistake that I personally have made. It makes me uncomfortable doing this into a tape recorder, bearing my sould like this for you to hear. I'm trying to remember the most recent argument I had with my daughter about my failure as a mother. It had to do with her wanting to go somewhere and my telling her she couldn't that she was still a child and could not go. And she said, 'that's sure convenient, when I need to be a child, I'm a child, and when I need to be an adult, then I'm an adult.' That's probably it in a nutshell. I probably do that all the time. That's what I'll write about . . . inconsistency . . . a mother's tendency to be inconsistent in rearing young teenagers. I think I'll play around with that argument.

Please, oh please, mom, let me go to the concert Friday night. Everyone is going and I mean everyone. Please, I beg of you, please, please. Oh, for goodness sakes, that's enough, Lisa, you're acting like a child. You know why I won't let you go, you're just not an adult, no, I actually didn't say that . . . I said you're just not old enough. You don't have the experience to handle

a situation like that. Well, that's it in a nutshell. The biggest mistake I've made in rearing my children is that I've been inconsistent.

. . . for them to be . . . treat them like . . . when I feel like I'm justified in asking them to share the responsibilities of the home and how to be mature enough to think for yourself . . . the end result is the old saying 'the kids wear the sweaters when I am cold,' have no coping resources, are left to . . .

Okay, where do I go from there? The focal point in the opening statement is inconsistency. Maybe that's not really the biggest mistake I've made. Look, I'm inclined to go ahead to do this paper as I would really do it, focusing on the real mistake, not letting them know that I'm a person, but I've got fifty papers to grade, and I'm going to finish this according to the original plan.

I'm going to have to get back to that introduction in the conclusion. How would I do things differently if I had them to do over again? I've got to get back to that rock concert idea and to the quotation about Lisa going. I'll end up sort of tongue-in-cheek, and answer. Then I'll explain how my kid ends up spending half her time at the shrink because her mother is inconsistent, and make my readers feel better, because I imagine most mothers are as inconsistent as I am. I won't make anyone feel guilty, but we've identified the problem and can all try a little harder to correct it. God knows that I wouldn't deliberately be a failure as a mother any more than a student would deliberately turn in a failing paper. It just happens.

I'm . . . uh, going to follow that plan and do a draft. I won't have time to do a finished draft. If I were going to do it, I would need to solidify the paragraphs and plan on some more detailed examples of what my mother said to me, and what I said back, and what I say to my children, and what they say back to me. It's very important to show rather than tell, and in my revising I would go back and make it much more detailed and personal, because I plan to have a personal confessional kind of piece. I'd really go back three times or more, once to mop-up the technical things, once to proofread for final effect. I hope you understand that I didn't do all the drafts because I just don't have time.

See, I got messed up with the first idea. I got going on it and realized it was not really what I would have

said, but this will certainly accomplish much the same thing. The only difference is topical . . . not the method.

Joy produced three handwritten pages of text, each one single-spaced. She returned it to the investigator in its rough form, with substitutions and deletions indicated. The test of her product follows.

"Please, oh please, Mom, let me go to the rock concert Friday night. Everyone, and I mean everyone is going. Oh, please, please, I beg of you, please, please, please!"

"Oh, for goodness sake, hush your mouth, Lisa, you're acting like a child. You know why you can't go--you're just not old enough, don't have the experience to handle a situation like that."

And that, fellow mothers, in a nutshell, is one of the biggest mistakes I've made in rearing my teenage children. Specifically, I have been inconsistent in dealing with my offspring. When it's convenient to treat them as children, I treat them as such. When I want to justify my requests (be responsible! think for yourself! use your own mind!) I treat them as adults. The end result is that my children wear sweaters when I am cold, and they have no coping resources when left to their own devices.

Okay, I've come out of the closet and admitted to other mothers that I am inconsistent. How did I get that way? What caused me to violate every bit of advice I've read on the subject? Well, it certainly wasn't on purpose. No one sets out by design to fail motherhood questionnaires. What did happen is that I believed children were rational creatures by virtue of their being human beings. When I was young and wanted to play in a rainstorm, my mother said, simply, no. I would ask why and all she would say was, 'because I told you so.' I grew up, read philosophy and Dr. Spock, and to the inevitable why would give long, detailed answers filled with logical explanations. My children grew up with expectations.

After years of explaining, I grew weary of these tedious conversations and began using stock answers: 'You can't do that because you're too young' or 'too old' or 'why don't you grow up' or 'you're acting too big for your britches.' And that's how it began. It was much easier to say 'you're too young' than it was to consult the Guinness Book of World Records on how many children per

year are struck by lightning while playing in a rainstorm. I had fallen into the trap of feeling obligated to answer all of those questions, and running out of answers I became inconsistent.

If I had it to do all over again (and thank God I don't) I would never give logical explanations for anything. Never would I go to great lengths to justify 'no.' When 'why' came, I would smile sweetly but firmly and say 'because I said so.' Unfortunately, I must continue functioning as a parent for a few more years. My salvation lies in the kind of ultimatum I at last had the courage to offer Lisa concerning her attendance at the rock concert: 'You may not go simply because you are too young. Furthermore, you and I need to spend some time talking about you assuming more responsibility around the house since, after all, you're almost grown.'

Consistency is, after all, the hobgoblin of little minds."

Joy met with the investigator for a post-taping interview. The transcript of that interview follows.

What do you remember about high school writing experiences? or about writing you do as an English Teacher?

It's been a long time since I was in high school, so I guess what I remember is what was most emphasized. I remember the teachers who were concerned mostly with the prettiness of the finished product. They were obsessed, as I recall, with perfect margins, neat handwriting, the total absence of mechanical error. An 'I' that wasn't dotted was a mortal sin. During that time, I, too, was mechanically oriented and governed all of my writing to their expectations. The teachers told us what they expected, and we all followed it to a T. In college, writing was either creative or research. If asked to give our own opinions about a poem or an essay, I tried early on to formulate my own ideas. I soon learned, however, that it was far more rewarding from a grade-point of view to do research and then quote whoever it was I had read. Creative writing courses were my favorite because I could try out different techniques to please my reader. Professionally, I'm called upon to write very little. Maybe a clever memo here and there, or a note dashed off on a student's essay. I keep writing and intending to submit articles for publication, but I spend so much of my time grading essays that I have little time for professional writing.

If you don't do professional writing much, what kind of self-initiated writing do you do?

Letters, business and personal. Considering what I teach, I do very little of it, either. When I have my students write, I try to join in, mostly as a psychological gimmick to clean the garbage from my mind before I start teaching.

Joy, this may seem odd, but do you like to write?

Can I take the 5th? How embarrassing to admit that I, the teacher of writing, do not enjoy writing. I take that back. I do enjoy creative writing, and I often try my hand at poems of short pieces. What I detest is academic writing. I hated writing my masters thesis more than any piece of writing I've ever produced.

What do you think is the most important thing to do when writing?

There is no ONE concept. I think, though, that some are more helpful to the struggling writer than others. The two that I harp on constantly are knowing what role you're playing and who your reader is. I go absolutely nuts on audience. I think you can never produce a decent piece of writing unless you know who's going to read it.

That was what you first focused on in your tape . . .

Obviously . . . I think audience is the most important consideration. I try to decide all of those things before I even start thinking about what I'm going to say.

Then you limited the topic. What gave you the right to tamper with it?

I'm an authoritative, bossy, teacher-type. I simply could not conceive of justifying anything as THE BIGGEST mistake. Nor could I bear the thought of covering the entire gamut from birth to adulthood. The idea was so overwhelming I couldn't have dealt with it.

Where did you get your idea of how long the piece should be?

Oh, probably I was thinking in terms of freshman composition assignments. Usually, class writing assignments are around five hundred words.

You indicated that you changed ideas in the middle, but you said you didn't want to take the time to go back. Is it a typical thing for you to do, to change thesis in the middle of the process?

Not really. I always plan considerably about my identity as the writer and the type of audience for whom I'm writing. And then one idea will sort of lead to another. Sometimes I hit upon one so good that I abandon everything and start over again. In real world terms, I would do that. But not in this case.

How much time do you normally spend thinking before you write?

Often it depends on how much time I have before the deadline. Usually I procrastinate because I work best under pressure, the creative juices flow best then. I don't ever take notes. My planning is mental. I go through an internal checklist of who am I as writer, who is the reader, what is my purpose, what method shall I use, what do I need to emphasize. Even if I don't write it down, I go over it in my head.

One last question, Joy. What do you think of composing aloud?

At first I hated it. I felt very self-conscious and worried about my future if it ever leaked that the writing teacher can't sit down and write. After a while, though, I forgot about the recorder and attempted to attack the problem with some semblance of method. I think I've learned that I should always give my students more than one topic. And if they can't write on any of them, I'll find one they can use. So much of our writing is contrived. It was nice of you to remind me how important the topic is in governing the extent to which a writer can become enthusiastic about writing.

Joy, and Sue as well, appeared to demonstrate a substantial difference in composing strategy from Joe, Ken, Amy, and Ted. The two of them spent more time planning the piece than writing it, and their concerns were not about generating ideas or avoiding errors or simply finishing the task, but were instead directed toward developing a conception of the writing context prior to putting words on paper.

Joy's first words after stating the topic involved her analysis of the readership of Parents magazine. She conceived of the type of magazine involved, and the type of reader who might buy it. Then she directed her planning toward limiting the topic, first to a single mistake, then to a specific age group, and then to a writing persona which might compensate for her perception that "experts" would be what the reader would prefer on the limited topic she had focused upon. The next consideration was still one of planning, of planning how long the piece would need to be. She indicated in the interview that she gathered her standard from the length of assignments in composition classes.

Her next pre-composing concern was one of determining her purpose, linking audience and persona and limited topic to that purpose. She determined that she need to 'tell young mothers who read Parents one of the pitfalls to avoid.' The subsequent issue was stylistic in nature. She elected to attempt a personal confessional narrative. Once those planning decisions were made, she began to generate an idea around which she could build her essay. For Joy and Sue, then, the process of brainstorming an idea or several ideas is something which occurs after they have determined certain elements of the overall discourse and its context.

During the process of composing, Joy determined that she actually had discovered a better thesis for the article. She continued with the thesis she was already working on, however, because of time constraints as well as her feeling that she could execute the same plan with the original focus. In-process planning was evident when Joy instructed herself to return to the original dialogue and finish it as the

conclusion for the piece. Her composing section began with planning, and ended with planning, as well. She indicated that, were she going to spend the amount of time she would ideally spend on the piece, she would go back over the essay and insure that there were more details which might insure that the piece followed her conception of it as a confessional narrative. As Joy indicated, she "tries to decide all of those (important) things" before she "even starts thinking about what to say."

Liz

Liz is a forty-year-old white female, holds a master's degree in journalism, and is employed as a professional writer in a university publications department. In addition, she has published fifty or sixty feature articles and has several novels under consideration by publishers. After an initial interview in which the process of composing into a recorder was explained, Liz began her composing session, which lasted approximately three hours. A protocol of her composing session follows.

> Testing, testing. Okay, an article for Parent magazine on the biggest mistake parents make in rearing their children. I couldn't even begin to tell you what that is. Intended audience would be the parents of young children, which would be mostly mothers, probably very conscientious middle-class mothers. Okay, the things that parents do wrong. Parents expect too much from their children, parents are inconsistent, parents are too hard on their kids, some are too lenient, so there's no universality there, so you can't take one of those approaches. It's going to be difficult to find one mistake which might apply to all parents. Parents should follow their own instincts more in raising their children . . . that would be more universal. I know so many mothers who are dependent on pediatricians, learning specialists, psychologists, for every decision they make

where their children are concerned. But . . . oh, dear . . . the readers of the magazine are probably precisely the type, very into experts. These are the very people who indeed look to a magazine to tell them how to rear their children.

Okay, what other mistakes do they make? How about expecting too much from their children? How about the middle-class phenomenon I've seen of parents who think their children are a reflection on them. If the kid doesn't excel, it says something about the parents. Parents want their children to be super-brilliant, super-jocks, super-musicians, super-Scouts, super-something. The mothers are caught up in the trap so much that they spend all their time taking their children to all of those lessons and practices. Parents get up at five to . . . you wonder if kids ever get to do the really . . . I remember I used to ride my bicycle for hours pretending to be on a horse. I was Roy Rogers or Dale Evans or something. Kids don't have any time anymore just to be kids, they're out busy trying to fulfill their parents' ego-trips.

I think I'll use that one. I'll call it the super-kid syndrome. We're talking about upper-middle-class kids here, the ones who would go out and pay two dollars to buy this magazine. I want you to understand that I'm putting aside what I really think the biggest mistake is. In fact, I don't even know. But I have to put that aside and think in terms of what the magazine is going to buy. People on soapboxes don't sell articles. If I were writing for this magazine, I'd have to document. That magazine would never buy a first-person article on a topic like this. They might if I were Dr. Spock or something, or a famous person like Betty Ford, or a model, or something. But I'm not a famous person, so I'm going to have to document it with made-up experts. Obviously I'm not going to take the time to go look up some information on this . . . I'm just going to write it as if I did.

Okay, now to begin. The most important thing about writing an article is to begin. Once you have an entre into an article, it will take off from there. I think of an article as a circular piece. You can enter it at any point and work your way back around to the beginning after you've gotten to the end. I wish I had a really good quotation to begin with, something like a statement from Dr. Spock that we are rearing a generation who don't know how to make a mud pie. I like that mud pie thing. Let's get the paper and see what comes out.

Okay, I have children don't make mud pies anymore. Why don't children make mudpies anymore? When's the last time you saw your kid make a mud pie? I like the third version . . . the rhetorical question works well as an attention device. I'll go with that. I think I'll build my first paragraph around it and all the other things you used to see children do.

So I'll start with the questions and then I'll go to the logical development of what things they're doing instead, and then I'll go into WHY they aren't doing them anymore, and that will carry me to the body of the article.

(types)

Okay, I'm going to need some experts. Now, I want you to know that I'd never do this kind of thing . . .

Mudpie. I need to look that up and see if it's one word or two. Anyway, I'm going to type now, and then I'll be back if I run into a snag or something. One more thing. The normal length of this kind of thing would be 1000-1500 words and you have to realize that the journalistic approach differs from the English teacher approach in that you people sit and write until the muse is silent and we write by the inch. Now, fiction is an entirely different process. There IS a muse in fiction, a creature that sits up on your right shoulder. But with something like this it's more like a jigsaw puzzle. You know what you want to say, in advance, you're not out there playing around with words like you do in fiction. I'm not saying this isn't creative, but it IS more technical, because you gather together all of the pieces of information and then decide how to put them together in an interesting way. And you must do it economically, since you can't get away with long pieces in this line of writing. In this case, I really don't have all the pieces of my puzzle. Ordinarily I'd go do all kinds of research on this before I ever wrote a word. I'd have many, many little pieces of paper in front of me--interviews, quotes, statistics, and I would sit down and look at my things, maybe use an encyclopedia or another magazine, too. This time I'm going to make up the pieces as I go. Which will probably be all right. We're going to pretend that I really have this information . . . Okay? . . . and that I'm ready now to string it together into an article.

(types)

Okay, I'm going to go with the non-sexist 'him or her' and I'm going to try to stick with that unless it becomes awkward later in the article. The "Australian crawl" gets me into the message right away, which may be too soon. I'll see as we go along.

(types)

I'm having trouble with non goal-oriented things. I'm writing in the second person, addressing the reader. I didn't want to start with first-person, for obvious reasons, but I may even have to back off this second-person, too.

(types)

I'm trying to avoid absolutes. I'm trying to use 'often' and 'many of their parents' . . .

(types)

I'm tempted to say we are raising a generation of super-kids, but that's first person. I don't think I want to be there. How about 'today's parents seem to be . . .' Yes, that will do . . .

(types)

I'm not talking enough, am I? You have to understand that the process is between me and my typewriter. I don't talk as I write, and I'm finding it difficult to tell you what I'm thinking, since I'm not all that conscious of thinking it. I've gotten through the introductory part and the extension of the thesis idea. Then I decided to give some examples, two of which are hypothetical and one of which is indeed my niece in Houston. These are my examples. Now I need some kind of transitional statement, that these are not merely isolated examples. Then when I com to the first generalization which would need support, I'll make up an expert.

(types)

I want you to know that in the real world, I wouldn't even do this on my own, but only if it were assigned by an editor, so I'd know in advance that someone would be interested in buying it. This is not the kind of topic that a magazine editor would actually like.

(types)

I'm making up my experts now. I've decided I need at least three, and I'm moving toward a transitional kind of question. I think I've used Smart and Wordpower. Next one will be Friendly. And then I want something like 'and what do Smart, Friendly, and Wordpower feel the cause of this super-kid syndrome is?' Surely I can word it better than that. I'm going to give their opinions and then move to the transitional question. Maybe it'll seem like I'm taking a long time to get to the topic, but I think this is the best way to get to that point in the circle.

(types)

Well, it turns out that I have four parts. There's the lead, the introductory part to arouse the reader's interest, then I identify the problem and give examples. Then I move to the experts segment . . . no, it's going to be five parts . . . where I use them to show that this is a national trend, not just isolated examples. Hey . . . since this is for Parents I'm going to have to soften this a little, not be too accusatory. I need to say it's all right for children to be children, that every kid doesn't NEED to be a super-kid. I have to be certain not to alienate them. I'm sure this magazine really prides itself on helping parents. Anything that they'd really print would . . .

(types)

This is no good. I feel so dishonest making up these experts and making up their queer names. This is the best I can do without really doing the research. I've finished a draft, but I'm not at all done. I think I've been too sarcastic. I don't have anything against sarcasm, but I don't believe that Parents would buy a sarcastic piece. Maybe I can go through it in the second draft and soften it up a bit for the magazine. But I DID get back to mud pies like I wanted to. I'll see what happens in the second draft. If I sent a sarcastic piece to this editor, I'd get it right back in the mail.

(types)

I'm ready to start the second draft. Usually I have a messy looking piece like this, but about eighty percent of it is there and just needs cleaning up. When I get to a third draft it will have to be what I want it to be. Some of the things I'll have to do then is state it better, take out the sarcasm, try to make the examples

not sound hypothetical. Hypothetical examples are never good, they aren't genuine, obviously, and that makes them not very interesting to a reader. I was orally outlining this thing for you and I left out a part. I have the intro, then the identification of the problem, then the examples of it, then the expert opinions to suggest that it's a trend, then the expert opinions on why it seems to be happening. Then I need to tell what they think we ought to do about the problem. Then I work back to the mud pie thing.

(types)

I've got eight pages. My word count is about 270 or 280 per page . . . yeah, probably I've got around 1800 words, which means it has to be a page shorter. I don't think I'll cut out any parts of the puzzle, but I'll take out a sentence here and there and get it down to the right length.

(types)

It's now five o'clock and I started three hours ago, which is longer than I intended to spend, but not as long as I would normally spend if I were doing this for real. This is a very slow process. You don't just pull a thing like this out of the typewriter. It has to be something other than a stream of consciousness. You have to write and then look at it and rearrange it and see what you've got and make corrections. It takes a long time.

(long pause in tape)

I've spent several hours on this, which is too much. I'm sure you've noticed I used passive voice in several places, which is not good. I also realized that I used Mark for the little boy's name, which I'd need to change since I also used Mark Spitz as an example. I could make him Johnny or something like that. Also, if I were rewriting this, I would work the three sets of parents in. I would like to quote them and show their doubts about whether or not they were running their children's lives in an appropriate fashion, how their lives were different from their kids' lives and how they feel about that.

The investigator met with Liz for a post-taping interview after the composing session had been transcribed and analyzed. The text of that interview follows.

What do you remember about writing in school, Liz?

Oh, I had good teachers. My junior high years were spent in military schools, and I think they always go out of their way to hire really good teachers. I especially remember one I had in the eighth grade who really worked on the grammar/punctuation end of writing.

Mostly mechanics?

This one, sure.

How about in high school?

Mostly literature, until my senior year. I didn't have a teacher who required much writing until I was in Texas during my senior year of high school, and she worked on report writing and term papers and . . . you know. It was the first time I had to do research in order to write something.

Did she ever work on the process of writing?

No, but she certainly evaluated the final product. I don't recall ever having talked about how one goes about writing.

And in college?

Well, back when I took freshman English it had a different name. That was the first time I was required to do analytical writing. Reading essays and responding to them, you know. First person who ever told me I was a good writer, though, was my freshman English teacher. I still have one of the papers with a compliment on it. It was in journalism, though, that I first learned anything about the process of writing. I remember the paper saying I was a good writer, and that's why I went for journalism at the graduate level.

What about personal kinds of writing?

Oh, I do letters, even letters to myself, sort of a diary in a strange form. I write things to myself a lot.

Did you learn a lot in news writing courses?

No, I didn't even take any until I got to the end of the program. I was in the professional writers'

sequence. I mostly learned how to write feature articles and such.

Did you find a disparity between the way your English and journalism courses were taught?

Oh, they approach writing much differently. I had never before journalism analyzed writing itself. I hadn't talked about organization, transitions . . . hell, I don't think I really knew what a transition WAS until I had a journalism course.

In your job, do you write a lot of articles?

Oh, originally I did, but mostly now I edit, which means that I decide what I want to write.

Do you like an assigned topic?

Yes and no. Sometimes when you instigate the writing you feel more involved in it. I think my ideas are better than other people's, anyway. Some of the assigned topics you get are too broad, too limited, or you can't work with them at all.

On the piece you did for me, the first thing you did was talk about the readership of . . .

Absolutely. When you are commercially oriented, you are FORCED to see that as the essential ingredient of any writing plan. You have to pay attention to WHOM you're writing for, what their expectations and requirements are. When you write a recruitment piece, you have to think in terms of the people you're trying to recruit. It's the most, single most significant element of any writing you ever do.

You talked about the reader before you thought of ideas. Would it work to think of ideas and then adapt them to the reader?

The reader must come first.

Well, you also limited the topic . . .

That's the main reason I like to write about individuals. They involve a narrow idea that you can cover well, rather than a broad idea which you have to search for a limit to.

I liked your concept of the circle . . .

Yes, I believe in that. I'm certain it's not original, but it's original for me. I don't remember anyone telling it to me, at least. I think of an article like a story. You can start at the beginning, or in the middle, or at the end, and then work your way forward or backward, or wherever, just so long as you tell the whole story.

Since this WASN'T fiction, how did you decide what elements needed coverage, Liz?

In this kind of article, you have several bases which you have to touch in order to be comprehensive. I think I've learned what you must cover in an article simply from the act of doing it over and over again. There are just some things you have to cover and it's only a matter of deciding in what order you'll cover them.

What governs your sense of when a piece is finished?

The word count. I usually write by the inch. In this case, I actually went to Writer's Market and looked up the suggested or recommended word count for Parent magazine.

You're kidding . . .

No, that's the way to know how long a piece should be. Even that has to be planned for the specific buyer.

How much time would you usually spend planning a piece before you started writing?

I would never sit down to write without all the information I thought I might need. I like to know who I'm writing for, what my purpose is, what my structure is going to be, almost everything before I actually write. I may be doing the dishes or driving down the road, but very often I'm still planning a piece that I'm writing or planning to write.

Do you think we stifle planning in English classes by not handing out the topics in advance--just to avoid plagiarism?

When I was actually teaching freshman English, I found it hard to get the process going for them. If you can ever once get them to put something on the page, you

can go from there. This is why I believe . . . I know this isn't in vogue, but I really do . . . believe in a mechanistic, business-like approach to writing. If you have a formula which says you must know what you need to accomplish before you start to attempt it, then the attempt ALWAYS turns out to be more productive. If you have that determined in advance, then the thousands of decisions you have to make while you actually write will sort of fall into place.

What did you think--just out of curiosity--about composing aloud?

It bothered me. It was not a natural thing for me to do. It isn't normal for me to talk aloud while writing. It made me self-conscious. It was a good process for me, because it forced me to plan what it was I was doing. But once I got into the act or writing, it interrupted the flow between me and my typewriter. When it occurred to me that my security was being violated, I simply turned it off and then turned it back on when I thought os something to say. I think this security thing is very important. It's another reason why I believe in formula-writing for unskilled students. It gives them some security.

You aren't opposed to the traditional approach . . .

Heavens no. They fail too much when left on their own. I think they can become more creative and individualized once they learn something. I see nothing wrong in saying, 'in paragraph one you will do this, and in paragraph two you will do this.' Once they have a structure that they KNOW will work then they can have the kind of security from which they can try other alternatives which MIGHT work. But if they discover that it doesn't work, then they have something to fall back on.

Thank you so much for doing this, Liz.

One more thing. I didn't put this on the tape, but after I finished I thought about it a lot. And I went back and made little changes, maybe a dozen times. Just a word here or a word there.

Don't you ever feel like you're finished?

Only when it's in the mail. Better yet, when it's in print. Even then, I look at a piece and think of things I could do to improve it.

The text of her titled manuscript follows:

THE SUPER KID SYNDROME

Have "normal" children gone out of style?

When was the last time you saw a kid make a mud pie?

Or spend hours floating around in a pool without someone giving him or her lessons on the Austrailian crawl?

Or spend a summer's afternoon playing unorganized baseball on a sandlot or simply riding a bicycle round and round the neighborhood, going no place and doing it for no reason in particular?

Remember when it was okay for a kid to waste time?

Today's children are often too busy for non-goal-oriented pastimes. They take lessons. And participate in organized activities. Children have goals. Children are busy practicing to excel.

Today's parents seem to be intent on raising a generation of super kids.

It is not unusual for children to spend the majority of their waking hours in pursuit of super kid status. Some devote all of their efforts to one activity. Others do not specialize and attempt to excel at many things.

One typical super kid is Leslie, a 13-year-old resident of Houston, Texas. She owns an Arabian horse and rides everyday, with formal equitation classes two afternoons a week. At least one weekend a month, she travels outside the city to compete in horse shows.

Leslie also takes flute lessons once a week and plays in a youth orchestra which practices twice a week before school and travels to competitive events at least twice a year. On the mornings she is not involved in orchestra, she swims with a local swim club team.

And Leslie is also the pitcher on her softball team, the goalie on her soccer team and the center on her basketball team. Each of these activities involves practice time. She has some sort of practice or lesson every weekday before and after school. Often she plays

tennis on Saturday, but only takes formal tennis lessons during the summer months. On Sundays, she helps with a pre-school Sunday school class.

Another super kid is Mark. He lives in Seattle and runs marathons. At age 11, he is one of the best young marathoners on the West Coast. His normal routine includes running six miles a day. He competes in an average of one marathon a month.

Although Mark has pretty much specialized in marathon, he does run other long-distance events and is a good golfer. He was runner-up for the junior championship at his parents' golf club. And he still participates in Boy Scout activities, although he and his parents have discussed his giving up scouting to allow him to devote more time to running.

Margaret lives in Oklahoma City. She is an 80-pound, 12-year-old gymnast. She and her mother leave home every morning at 5 a.m. to drive 45 miles to the city of Norman in order for her to take a six o'clock lesson with University of Oklahoma gymnastics coach Paul Ziert. And Margaret leaves school at 2 p.m. each day for a three-hour work out at a gymnastics facility near her hom. She participates in no other activity. For at age 12, Margaret has specialized, the decision having been made that she will devote her childhood to gymnastics.

These three super kids--Leslie, Mark and Margaret--all have supportative parents. Their families' schedules revolve around their activities, as do family vacation plans. Their mothers do not work and devote a great deal of time to taxi and other support services. Leslie and Margaret have super kid siblings. Mark is an only child.

All three families have large trophy cases in their family rooms for displaying the children's ribbons and awards.

Are these youngsters isolated examples of exceptional children doing their thing? Or are they somewhat typical of children all over the country?

According to Dr. Quincy Wordpower, author of Death Knell for American Childhood and child psycologist at Prestige Medical School, the super kid syndrome is assuming the proportions of a nationwide epidemic among middle and upper-middle class families.

"We are raising a generation of youngsters," Wordpower says, "who have never waded in creeks or climbed trees or dug in the dirt. Childhood as my generation knew it may soon be a thing of the past in urban, upwardly mobile America. Tom Sawyer and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm may go the way of the dinosaur. The model kids of the '80s are Nadia Kominich and Mark Spitz."

The Knob Hill School of Medicine psychiatrist who coined the term "super kid" believes the trend is neither healthy nor normal.

"I am appalled," Dr. Doris Smart says, "at the lack of childish things in our children's lives. Their lives are too regimented. While most parents are well-meaning, they do not stop to ask themselves what this pursuit of excellence is doing to their children. I see it as one of the biggest mistakes being made in child rearing today--this not letting children be children. They are being turned into little performing automatons. Parents push too hard. They expect too much of their kids."

Smart points out that childhood is a stage of life with identifiable developmental tasks that need to be accomplished during this period. She believes that bypassing childish activities can only result in troubled adults.

And Dr. Barry Friendly, Nobel Prize Winning pediatrician, documented the super kid syndrome in his study of 100 St. Louis youngsters who were identified by their teachers as having "above average commitment to organized, non-academic activities." He found that most of these children had less free time than other children their age. It was not unusual for the children in his study to have brothers and sisters who also pursued some organized activity with an "above average commitment."

Although most of the children in Friendly's study were good students, only nine had read a book in the past year that had not been assigned by a teacher. The most common reasons given by the children for not reading books was that they were too busy with practice, lessons and competitive events. They were also too busy for hobbies, pen pals, jumping rope, playing marbles and a variety of other activities.

To keep up with the super kid trend, more and more competitive opportunities are being created for children. The number of swim meets, track meets, horse show, gymnastic events, ball games, speech tournaments and even beauty contests for young misses is growing at an

impressive rate. One Oklahoma trophy manufacturer reported that his business doubled over the past two years, and he is having a difficult time keeping up with the demand in his area for ribbons and trophies. He estimates that 90 percent of these awards are for winning children.

Why is this happening? Why do so many children want to be super kids?

According to Wordpower, Smart and Friendly, it is not so much the children who want super kid status. It is their parents who want it for them.

"What we are seeing," Smart points out, "is a new kind of keeping up with the Joneses."

Smart believes that having over-achieving children in a family is a new sort of status symbol, taking its place along side non-working wives, expensive cars and architectual showplace homes. According to Smart, the accomplishments of these children are seen as proof that their parents can afford the lessons, equipment and travel to and from events--and in many cases, it proves they have a full-time mother who can devote herself to her children's activities.

Wordpower believes the trend is the result, at least in part, of media pressure. With the tremendous coverage given to Olympic and other sporting events, the sight of very young people doing extraordinary things and bringing a great deal of glory to their countries and to their families causes a lot of parents to push just a little harder. Parents with above average children start dreaming of Olympic gold.

Leslie, Mark and Margaret's parents all see Olympic competition as the ultimate goal of their children's athletic competition.

According to Wordpower, children's activities serve as an escape for many parents. Their jobs may be boring. Their marriage is long past the Honeymoon stage. They are beginning to realize they are never going to set the world on fire themselves--but perhaps they can be super parents. Because, Wordpower says, that is what the whole super kid thing is about--proving to the world that you are a super parent.

Friendly takes the super parent notion one step further. He believes that having children who are super achievers

announces to the world that the parents might also have been able to accomplish great things if they had been given the opportunity. After all, where did those kids get those great genes?

Friendly notes that two major reasons were given by the 100 children used in his study as to why they compete: to win and to please their parents.

Syndicated columnist Emma Chatty, recently commented that she is seeing a change in cocktail party conversation that illustrates the super parent theory.

"More and more," Chatty says, "I'm hearing parents brag--little clusters of attractive, educated, middle-class folks whose number-one topic of conversation is how fast little Johnny ran in last week's race or little Mary's ranking among state gymnasts. And it isn't just sports. I hear parents discussing their kids' I.Q.s, their ACT scores, their class ranking."

Chatty asks, "Doesn't anyone have ordinary kids anymore? Or are the parents of ordinary kids too embarrassed to come to cocktail parties?"

Wordpower, Smart and Friendly all join with Chatty in urging parents to allow their children to be more like children.

Dr. Smart says, "There is a tremendous amount of peer pressure being put on parents. If their child is a "C" student with no particular accomplishments, they are being made to feel they are failures as parents. Average kids are no longer socially acceptable."

Of course, some children are blessed with truly superior abilities. Perhaps it is the duty of these children's parents to cultivate these abilities. But one can not help but think of the Jim Thorps and the Jesse Owens and the countless other individuals who rose to the top in their field without devoting their one and only childhood to getting there.

But then there are Nadia Kominich and Mark Spitz. It did take all those years of sacrifice for them to accomplish what they did. And only they can say if it was worth it.

However, so few can accomplish what those two did. Yet hundreds of thousands of youngsters are being asked to make the same sort of sacrifice based on the unrealistic expectation that they too can do likewise.

Unfortunately, it is a decision that parents usually must make for children, at least in the beginning. For children are usually started on championship regimens long before they are old enough to objectively make such a decision for themselves.

Parents can ask themselves, however, why they are doing this to their child. Is it really in the child's best interest--or is it an ego trip for the parents? And that can be a very difficult decision to make if your son just ran faster than all the other sixth graders at his school.

It is a trap that is all too easy for parents to fall into. It seems as though they are going to all that trouble and spending all that money for the benefit of their child. But if those same parents will look back on their own childhoods and ask themselves whether they remember most fondly the crawdad hunts or the long hours their mothers made them practice piano lessons, perhaps they can find the beginnings of an answer.

And if they haven't touched a piano in years, the answer might come more readily.

The message that normal is not okay is a devastating one, for most kids are just that--normal. So are most parents.

School teachers, physicians, child-rearing experts and other parents need to do a better job of letting parents know that normal, average kids are okay. In fact, they may be the very best kind.

Maybe there needs to be a national competition to glorify normal kids. There could be awards for the ordinary kids in a variety of sporting and other events. Kids could win awards for adequate piano playing, less-than-fast running and not-quite-flawless floor exercises.

May there could be awards for pretty-good tree climbing, non-competitive bike riding and jumping far enough to get across the creek.

There could even be an award for the most average mud pie, unless the art of mud-pie making has been completely forgotten.

And at the end of this competition, the parents of these normal kids could be given a standing ovation.

Liz, like the other writers in this investigation, had an initial reaction of "what IS the biggest mistake?" once she read the topic for the writing project. Like Joy, however, she instantly focused on analyzing her stated audience, and this concern governed her planning throughout the entire composing process. Her initial brainstorming was redirected once she determined that the ideas she had conceived would be inappropriate for her readership, might not be universally applicable, might not be marketable to an editor. She determined that a reader of Parents would be interested in expert opinion, and so she directed the remainder of her brainstorming toward expert opinion. As she indicated in her protocol, what she personally felt to be the biggest mistake parents made was of no consequence; what was important was what a reader of that magazine would think.

Once Liz conceived of a governing idea, she relied on a developmental plan which she claims consistently to employ, the "circle concept" in which the writer enters the piece and merely decides in what order to cover those elements which would always need to be covered. A developmental plan began to emerge, as indicated by her discussion of the varying ideas she planned to cover. She appeared to have a clear sense of what she intended to say and in what order, although like all writers she did not yet have a fix on the words which she might use. The plan was apparent: "In this part I'll do this, and then I'll do this, and this . . ."

Once the plan was in place, the next issue for Liz was length. Where Joy determined appropriate length by comparing the piece to the standard classroom essay and the other writers wrote until they "ran

out of ideas," Liz determined that the piece needed to be of the word-count length preferred and recommended by Parents magazine. As she indicated in the post-taping interview, she did indeed look up the magazine's recommendations in Writer's Market, even for this exercise which would never actually be submitted to that publication.

The next planning consideration was how to "fit together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle" while still addressing the reader in the second-person. Once she decided how to accomplish that, she indicated a concern similar to Sue's--how to build the transition from the initial attention-getting sentences to the body of the essay itself. As Liz continued to compose the piece, creating mythical experts which she determined her readers would expect, she began to be concerned about tone, trying to plan to avoid an "accusatory tone" or "sarcasm." She evaluated her first draft in terms of the plan she had conceived of employing before she began it, and then rewrote a second and final draft with attention to removing the "accusatory tone" and "sarcasm" which had disturbed her in the first draft.

Even when discussing the "final" draft, Liz's attention appeared to be focused on plans for revisions which she would make were she to write another draft--the changing of a name, the elimination of passive voice in the text. For Liz, the composing issue is essentially and primarily planning. She referred to planning around an audience and a developmental structure as "the single, most significant element of any writing you do."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

We know from both the practice of teaching, as well as from the growing body of research data, just what the differences are between the products which skilled and unskilled writers produce once they have finished composing. In many respects, we are learning more and more about the differences between their actual processes of composing. But what about the differences between skilled and unskilled writers before they begin to put pen to paper? What are the differences in the ways in which the writer, from the most unskilled to the most proficient, approaches the very act of a rhetorical problem? What concerns does the skilled writer express which the unskilled writer ignores or bypasses?

The purpose of this study was to characterize and describe some of the differences that exist in planning considerations among writers from the most unskilled to the most proficient. In this chapter, the investigator will attempt to summarize the findings of the study, draw conclusions from those findings, and discuss implications for further research and teaching which might be derived from the study.

Summary

The most unskilled of the seven subjects saw his rhetorical problem as an ordeal to be terminated as quickly as possible. He

considered his topic to be a question requiring an answer, and he assumed that his audience was the investigator herself. He did not consider planning activities such as topic limitation, brainstorming of ideas, assuming a writing persona, or designing a textual structure in advance of composing. For this most "basic" writer, there appeared to be no sense of planning prior to putting words on paper--other than, perhaps, a plan to answer a question, and to do so as quickly as possible. The writer's process confirmed Mina Shaughnessey's theory of how most basic writers compose:

> They seldom know what they ought to--or want to--write about. They have not been trained to recognize their own intellectual vibrations, those inner promptings which generally reveal to writers where their best energies lie. More often, their training has been in the opposite direction--to try to understand or catch the sense of what someone else wanted them to do, as if the theme they were to write existed elsewhere in perfect form, and their task was to approximate it.[1]

The second subject in the investigation, equally "basic" by standard measures but apparently more skilled, began the composing process with enthusiasm and gradually began to feel more and more trapped in the "mess" she had generated. Her planning considerations did not appear to include limiting the topic, assuming a persona, or analyzing an audience. She did, however, make plans concerning the use of examples--a textual consideration--and did brainstorm possible ideas for development in her essay. There were, in contrast to the initial subject, some planning considerations involved in her composing process.

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[1]Mina Shaughnessey, Errors and Expectations, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 82.

Her ultimate attention to planning appeared to center around brainstorming ideas, and then attempting to link those ideas into a cohesive paper. Once she felt that she began to "run into dead ends," she did not appear capable of generating composing plans while writing and felt "trapped" and urged to "quit". The second subject's protocol confirmed Flower and Hayes's evaluation of the results in inadequate planning:

> Some writers have a very limited repertory of thinking techniques to call on as they write. They may find themselves trapped in the endless frustration of a search when they really need to be generating an idea structure. This inability to change tactics when the current procedure has failed leads to a block or dead end.[1]

The third subject, a "traditional" writer, evidenced limited attention to planning considerations. He brainstormed ideas, and bordered on limiting his topic when he questioned its broadness. He did not appear to consider audience, but he did give attention to textual considerations--finding "bridges" between ideas, qualifying his ideas as opinions, and linking his ideas together into a comprehensive coverage of the topic. His planning during the act of composing appeared to be limited to attempts to link his ideas together. His protocol seems to evidence the kind of composing process which Shaughnessey refers to as "the record of an idea developing rather than the development of an idea,"[2] and which Flower refers to as "the myth of discovery

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[1]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process," College English, December 1977, p. 451.

[2]Shaughnessey, Errors and Expectations, p. 234.

which leads the writer to give up too soon or be satisfied with too little."[1]

The fourth subject, also characterized as a "traditional" or "regular" writer, evidenced planning considerations focused exclusively on teacher as audience and prevention of textual error. His process is task-oriented, and the task is the avoidance of error and the application or rigid structure. He did consider audience to some degree where style of language was concerned, but not where content or organization were involved. Like the other "traditional" subject in the study, his emphasis on planning while composing is placed on adequacy rather than excellence. His process confirms the evaluation by Emig of the planning activity called "anticipation":

> Student writers frequently demonstrate the phenomenon of anticipation in their writing as they compose aloud. They anticipate the use of an element to fill out the intervening matter. There are clear signs of divided attention as they focus upon the here and now while considering where future elements will best appear.[2]

The fifth subject evidenced the first significant writer attention to planning considerations. She readily began to employ a standard composing plan, the generating of initial sentences from which she might extend an overall piece of writing. She evidenced attention to readership, and gave considerable attention to textual planning--the generating of transitions, the adherence to a composing plan in

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[1]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," College Composition and Communication, February 1980, p. 22.

[2]Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, Urbana, Illinois, NCATE 1971, p. 41.

the body of the paper, and so forth. She was the first of the subjects to think in terms of an "architectural plan" to which a writer need adhere while in the process of composing. In interview discussion, however, she argued that this sense of planning was, for her, unconscious rather than intentional.

The two final subjects, the most proficient writers in the study, were the writing teacher and the professional writer, both of whom devoted considerable attention to planning, not only prior to composing but while composing. The writing teacher's immediate attention was directed to planning for a specific readership, and then to limiting her topic. At that point, she conceived of a writing persona other than her own, one which would be best suited to her readership. The next consideration was directed toward further planning, toward determining how long the piece should be and what its purpose should be. Then she selected a rhetorical mode from which to write, personal narration, and began to generate ideas around which she could build her essay out of her assumed persona for her stated audience. In-process planning was evidenced by her determination to correlate introduction and conclusion, limit examples to those which would be consistent with her introductory example, and so forth.

For the professional writer who followed, planning consumed several hours. She immediately conceived of an audience, and directed initial brainstorming toward that audience. She limited idea development to those meanings which would be appropriate to create for her readership, regardless of their compatibility with her personal opinion. She spent a great deal of time discussing her "circular plan" technique,

and indicated a clear, guiding sense of what she intended to say, in what order, in what style, and to what degree of development. For the professional writer, the process of composing is one of "fitting together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle" in accordance with constraints of readership and length. She evaluates her work throughout the process of composing it according to that planning strategy. For the professional writer and the writing teacher, the composing issue is essentially and preeminently one of planning. Both writers refer to planning around an audience and a developmental structure as "the single most significant element of any writing" one does. The more skilled writers differ from the unskilled writers according to the schema suggested by Flower and Hayes:

> A writer may resort to a prescriptive method taught in school, prized as a sure-fire formula for writing. The method is simple: name the topic, generate ideas, and then elaborate to fill in the blanks created by the outline.
>
> Experienced writers, (however), try to pull an outline out of the material they generate, rather than trying to fill in an outline.
>
> What the experienced writer does is to envision, formulate, and create his or her own problematic situation, rather than (adhering to the rhetorical problem set up by the classroom teacher).[1]

Conclusions

The purpose of the comparison of planning considerations by writers of varying proficiency is to find some insights into which issues need more consideration than others, a contention supported by the proponents of case-study research:

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[1]Flower and Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," pp. 22-23.

> The causal-comparative approach, which is designed to identify the contrasting characteristics between representatives of extremes of a given phenomenon, can sometimes provide insight into which factors need to be considered and which can perhaps be ignored.[1]

What, then, are the conclusions one might draw from having examined and identified contrasting characteristics of the composing processes of writers at varying proficiency levels?

Initially, the data suggest that Flower and Hayes's analysis of five planning considerations is accurate--attention to assignment, audience, persona, meaning, and text. Where the data derived from this study are concerned, several conclusions seem apparent. First, the basic writers seemed to consider only considerations of assignment, making no planning decisions other than completing that assignment. For the more traditional writers, planning decisions appeared to include attention to meaning (the generating of ideas) and textual concerns (introductions, error-avoidance, transitions, and so forth). The honors student is the first of the subjects to add plans for the assumption of a writing persona to her composing plan. While the writing teacher appears to give attention to all five areas for planning decisions, only the professional writer seemed to link all of those decisions together with an emphasis on audience.

Second, the data suggest that the amount of composing time allotted to planning considerations and decisions varies in accordance with writing proficiency. From the most unskilled writer to the pro-

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[1]George L. Mouly, The Science of Educational Research, (New York: American Book Company, 1963), p. 361.

fessional writer, the amount of composing time spent in planning prior to writing varies from minimal to extensive. Where the amount of composing time spent in planning while writing is concerned, the variance is from nonexistent to extensive.

Third, the data suggest that writers who serve as subjects find composing aloud to be an often-distracting process. Almost all of the writers express discomfort, and make apologies and disclaimers about the thoughts and feelings which they express or fail to express while composing. One conclusion of this study, then, is that writers might find composing aloud to be an interference in the process of composing. Earlier researchers do not appear to have drawn such a conclusion to their studies.

Implications

Initial implications involve suggestions for further research. While it does not constitute a hypothesis to be tested, it might be significant to investigate the effect of composing aloud on a writer's composing process -- to examine the very effect of the research technique on the process of writing and the product it generates. Perhaps it would be significant to compare composing processes of writers while composing aloud against videotapes of their composing. Furthermore, another nonhypothetical research suggestion would be to conduct a study to confirm or deny the writing behaviors evidenced by the writers who serve as subjects for this investigation. The research questions might well be, are these behaviors evidenced by the subjects in this study typical for other subjects at these levels of proficiency.

Two experimental hypothesis, however, appear to generate from the descriptive data derived from this study:

> Writing proficiency increases as attention paid to planning consideration increases.
>
> Audience analysis as the center of planning activity will tend to increase writing proficiency.

Both experimental hypotheses should be tested for denial or confirmation.

A final implication is pedagogical. To what extent might forced attention to the planning aspect of the composing process increase student writing proficiency? The data from the investigation appear to suggest that there is a link between attention given to planning and quality of product resulting from the composing process. To that extent, the data support the pedagogical implications offered by prior study and research. For the basic writer, forcing planning attention to a reader other than the teacher has been suggested already by Bruner:

> Much of the problem in leading a child to effective cognitive activity is to free him from the immediate control of environmental rewards and punishments. Learning that starts in response to the reward of teacher approval or to the avoidance of failure can too readily develop a pattern in which the child is seeking cues as to how to conform to what is expected of him.[1]

For the traditional writer, forcing planning attention to the composing process itself--including all of its planning considerations-- has been suggested by Shaughnessey:

> To overcome such difficulties, the composition course should be the place where the writer not only writes but

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[1]Jerome S. Bruner, On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 88.

> experiences in a conscious, orderly way the stages of the composing process itself.[1]

For the better-than-average writer, forced planning attention to audience--suggested by the most proficient subjects in the study to be the single most significant element in that process--has been suggested by Steinberg: "People who write well use audience as a generator of ideas, as a constraint, and as a means of organizing; I think that we ought to teach writing that way from the beginning."[2]

The issue, of course, is ultimately pedagogical. When each subject in this investigation was asked to describe his or her background in writing, invariably the subject began the discussion by focusing on his or her writing teachers. Mina Shaughnessey states quite well the implications of research on the composing process where teachers are concerned:

> The teaching of writing to unprepared college-age students is but the frontier of a profession. The skill that teachers have contracted to teach is itself among the most complex of human activities and the students who sit in their classrooms, young, intelligent, and miseducated men and women, depend as students have never depended before upon having good teachers. The 'remediation' of their teachers may, in fact, be the most important education going on today.[3]

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[1]Shaughnessey, Errors and Expectations, p. 81.

[2]Erwin R. Steinberg, Cognitive Processes in Writing, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates, 1981), p. 165.

[3]Mina Shaughnessey, in Teaching Composition, ed. by Gary Tate, (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 167.

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