At the simplest level, the sociolinguistics of conversation suggests that we take greater care in identifying the particular cultural expectations our students bring to the classroom. More seriously, these studies suggest that the deep structure-surface structure, competence-performance distinction has misdirected our attention in theories of literacy acquisition. We need to turn our attention to the surfaces of conversations, to performance, to ritual. Strategies encompass and condition meanings. John Gumperz goes so far as to argue that the surface features of conversation should be seen as a coherent system for organizing conversational interpretations: "The notion of contextualization conventions enables us to treat what on the surface look like quite separate linguistic phenomena—codes and style switching, prosody, phonetic and morphological variations, choice of syntactic and lexical option – under the same heading by showing that they have similar relational and signalling functions" (208). Each culture possesses a set of conventions for creating common sense interactions. All members of a given culture believe that their own native common sense conventions actually constitute a universal outline of human rationality, "I can't imagine anybody not knowing how to follow a conversation in just the same way I do." At the most immediate surface of conversation, we see the system for creating the deepest levels of "common sense."

Ironically, Gumperz' approach calls for a return to that tradition of stylistic analysis that has been marginalized into the subfield called Oral Interpretation. Gumperz wants us to look at just those apparently trivial aspects of gesture and voice that written culture works so hard to suppress. At the same time Gumperz goes beyond the tradition by arguing that these features of performance constitute a system and that, for each culture, that system constitutes the groundwork of common sense.

We learn to follow from one sentence to the next, how to use inference patterns, by learning how various styles of voice and gesture signal particular conversational rules. Freshman English teachers can predict some of the subcultural differences that will emerge in conferences and workshops, differences of gender, class, nationality and generation. However, surrounding all these sub-cultures, at the source of our difficulties, resides the problem of medium – the blank page has not body, does not speak.

One of my brightest students, a leader in workshop discussions, continuously missed writing assignment deadlines, turning in late papers of one scribbled paragraph. She reported her difficulty as a quite simple one, "I can't be alone." Whenever she found herself alone before the blank page, she felt panicked by the deathlike silence. This student is confronting the crucial disjuncture between conversation and literacy, the silence of texts. Gumperz argues, "Of primary importance for conversational analysis is the role prosody plays in enabling the conversationalists to chunk the stream of talk into the basic message units which both underlie interpretation and control the turn taking or speaker change strategies that are essential to the maintenance of conversational involvement" (107). The blank page offers no prosodic cues. My student confronted the silence of the blank page as an avalanche of non-conversation. Happily, however, she loved to read, had acquired a large, diverse set of inner reading voices. She had only to grasp the analogy between voices created for reading with voices emerging onto the blank page in order to begin writing effectively.

Many of our students do not possess this reservoir of inner reading voices; many of our students hear nothing when they read. Those students who read aloud in a computer-like monotone are accurately reporting their experience with the printed page. No people, no sound, no human contact, no intonation. Without self-created intonation patterns, Gumperz implies, these students merely process word lists, not meanings, not values, not genuine conversation. For these students, the work of reading has never yet felt like a genuinely human contact with a real, inner voice. These students cannot pass into the realm of literate discourse merely through increased volume of reading; these students need a different quality of experience, the opportunity to encounter a text, any text, as human discourse.

Finally, a conversational approach calls on us to rethink the concept of revision. From the standpoint of ordinary conversation, revision appears as a confused and contradictory idea. Teachers tell students to rethink, resee, rewrite their papers toward improved coherence, cohesion, style, effect, etc. Inexperienced students return with superficial repairs to mechanics, inserted sentences which merely paraphrase old sentences, or perhaps a completely new paper on a new topic. From the standpoint of conversation, these strategies make perfect sense: A slip of the tongue is repaired with, "Oops, I meant to say . . ."; a misunderstanding is repaired by a restatement from a different angle; a signal of boredom or satiation is repaired by switching topics. Spoken words go out into the world, sometimes effectively, sometimes not. When we recognize misfires, we repair them. Texts show no evidence of repair; texts are perfect, inevitable. Texts never change; from the first moment we see them, all the right words appear in all the right places. Texts require no repair. All the work we teachers call revision goes on in secret places, beyond time, hidden in the souls of geniuses, performed perfectly, revealing neither seams nor flaws. When we set the rules of ordinary conversation beside the concept of revision in writing proesses, we are challenged to recognize that ordinary talk does not involve the complex, highly specialized project that turns the messy work of composition into the pristine linearity of text.

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INVESTIGATING PRODUCTIVITY AND OTHER FACTORS IN THE WRITER'S PRACTICE

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One of the most powerful and widely discussed ideas in composition studies the last ten years or so is the notion of a shift from the so-called current-traditional paradigm to a process-centered one. The power to believe in this changing of paradigms has given the profession a focus and rallying point for making important progress. But like any compelling belief, attachment to this idea has caused some problems.

One serious problem is that the practical outcome of paradigm change in the classroom too often comes to resemble the oil change in a car – out with the old, in with the new. More and more, it seems, I find myself talking with teachers and composition directors who say they have changed from teaching grammar or teaching rhetorical patterns or teaching expository

writing to teaching the writing process or, worse, "process writing." A related problem is that shared by textbook writers and publishers who pour a quart of writing process into a publication with a leaky gasket or feel compelled to concoct some new formula altogether.

Such attitudes and approaches will not get us very far. As Lester Faigley has pointed out, there is, from a theoretical point of view at least, no such thing as *the* writing process: conceptions of the writing process vary from theorist to theorist. Furthermore, if we ever become able to rid ourselves of the need to formulate narrow and competing theories, we will also probably find that perceptions of the writing process, within certain limits, vary from successful writer to successful writer and, as Maxine Hairston believes, even from one piece of writing to the next. Whatever the case, any interpretation of theory based on a change of paradigms that centers our attention on any single view of "the writing process" finally cannot turn out to be very useful in the teaching of writing.

Moving Beyond Process

As a remedy for such problems, Faigley suggests that we broaden the range of our vision by considering the various traditions and structures within which writing and the teaching of writing take place. This is a very useful idea because it encourages us to look closely not only at the immediate concerns of process theory and pedagogy, but also at those aspects of teaching and learning that lie beyond our current understanding of process. Take cabinet making for example (as many have). Human beings clearly understand the process of cabinet making – understand it much better than the process of writing. Yet not everyone is a cabinet maker, and we feel very comfortable with this fact. We know that other factors besides understanding the process of making cabinets make a cabinet maker. However, we do want all our students to be writers, which is to say that we want all our students to be independent practitioners of the craft of writing. Simply changing over and teaching some version of the writing process will not help students become writers. At best they will become writing students, and there is a big difference between writing students and writers.

Too often writing students do not receive the tools they need to begin to take control of their own writing. Too many writing students receive from their teachers an image of the writer's work that does not even approximate the habits of mind and practice cultivated by writers. One common pattern of writing instruction, for example, which includes a teacher or textbook generated writing task, detailed directions, a model, and a built-in timetable, may account for "the writing process" as it comes to be interpreted from some popular competitive theory. However, such an approach presents students with an image in which they need only be concerned with certain aspects of the total range of the writer's work. Such an approach and such an image fail to give writing students an opportunity to develop skills experienced writers find truly basic – skills born of the need to establish for themselves and maintain personal writing habits and patterns in the context of living the full life of a human being.

But how do we get beyond the limits of writing process research and help our students become aware of the broader contexts within which the particular acts of composing occur? How can we, in effect, re-interpret what has come to be called the writing process so that it can be understood not as the sole point of our teaching, but as contributing to a broader, more liberal understanding of the writer's work? In this essay I would like to explore one factor, "productivity," which may help us do that. Before I focus on productivity, however, I would like to show by means of two familiar examples what I mean by "moving beyond" and understanding process in a broader context.

The first example has to do with "conviviality," the concept Michael Polanyi uses in *Personal Knowledge* to refer to the tendency all animals, not just humans and not just cabinet makers, have to learn from each other. Polanyi puts it this way: "a true transmission of knowledge takes place when an animal shares in the intelligent effort which another animal is making in its presence" (206). Perhaps it seems a bit earthy to think of our work in these terms, but one often criticized feature of certain forms of writing process research is that in order to control variables the composing process is de-contextualized and the writer/subject isolated.[1] The results of such research, consequently, may produce views of the process that are applicable to the laboratory, but not to social and classroom rhetorical situations. Recognizing the importance of conviviality is a way that, as a profession, we have been able to build on and move easily, almost without noticing, beyond these self-imposed limits of research. In fact, perhaps most composition teachers today profess great faith in the power of convivial relationships by making workshopping and conference teaching such a central part of their work.

A second example has to do with "responsibility." Important word on the subject of responsibility came from Donald Graves ten years ago in "Let's Get Rid of the Welfare Mess in the Teaching of Writing." Graves' main point in that essay is just as true today as it was then: teachers of writing – at all levels – tend to assume too much responsibility in the classroom, making their students dependents rather than independent writers. One source of this problem stems from the tendency some teachers and textbook publishers have to believe, on the basis of a narrow interpretation of research, that certain formulas for the writing process exist that students can be taught to manipulate. When this happens, as Kathleen Welch points out, the writing process is transformed into nothing more than a fifth mode of discourse, and the result is that the teacher, not the student, takes responsibility for setting the patterns and procedures for the work of composing. However, in the many classrooms where teachers are able to reach beyond these limitations and to understand the acts of composing in the context of their students' need to make decisions for themselves, responsibility is restored to the writer's hands. The teachings of Graves and Donald Murray, who assert "there is no one way," are useful models here.

Productivity, which I want to focus on in this essay, although not so familiar, may be a factor just as important as conviviality and responsibility in helping us enlarge our sense of writing instruction. Robert Boice, who directs the Center for Faculty Development at California State University at Long Beach, has proposed a way of moving past a narrow fixation on both process and product by considering what he refers to as the "neglected third factor in writing: productivity." Boice came to consider productivity in the process of working with faculty clients who suffered from writer's block. Boice reasoned that, despite the complex explanations we sometimes must use to explain why creative people lose their ability to be creative, the problem his clients were having had at least one simple dimension, and that was they were not producing. After confirming the obvious fact that successful writers do put a high value on simply producing words regularly, Boice hit on the equally simple therapy of dispensing rewards and punishments designed to force the blocked writers into productivity. Not only did this seem to get them moving again, but subsequent study by Boice suggests that forced productivity also helped make the formerly blocked writers more creative. Boice concludes that regular writing practice,

even if forced, leads to higher levels of productivity, fluency, and creativity, and that various aspects of the writing process such as prewriting are developed most fruitfully as they "evolve naturally from a regimen of daily preoccupation with writing" (478).

There is much that is unappealing about the notion of "forced productivity" as Boice conceives of it and in the Skinnerian conclusion he draws that "productivity precedes creativity." However, it is encouraging that Boice's research moves beyond the limited categories often derived from writing process research and that he is able to discuss ways of helping troubled writers that take into account a broader range of factors than writing skills and strategies.

Investigating Productivity in the Classroom

Productivity, whatever its importance to Boice's blocked writers, is not one of those factors that has been widely recognized as important in the teaching of writing. One reason for this is that it is not easily derived from current theories of the writing process, many of which are driven by research techniques based on single writing episodes tightly controlled by the researchers. Another reason is the common belief that it is important to maintain a distinction between quantity and quality (even though, as in the case of the relationship between musical practice and performance, the two cannot always be separated).[2] Another reason is the negative image that has become attached to an emphasis on quantity in composition – the image of the student slaving away to meet a quota of words, dutifully noting each hundredth one in the margin. Recently, I have had occasion to speak with several audiences of teachers about productivity, and in each case their initial reaction was negative, based on some presupposition that productivity, especially "forced productivity," is analogous to "punishment."

However, there are many precedents in the practices of writers and writing teachers that form an initial ground of support for productivity in the classroom. Boice, in his research, cites the many recorded anecdotes of writers who attribute their success to "long-standing daily preoccupation with writing" (473). Donald Murray, in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, while he does not advocate forced productivity, does emphasize the importance of quantity and the need for writers to set quotas (50). And Peter Elbow, in *Writing Without Teachers*, when he recommends a series of intensive periods of writing without stopping is, in fact, proposing one way of structuring forced productivity into the writing process (18-25).

It was the results of Boice's research and the work of Murray and Elbow, as well as my own experience as a writer, that led me to believe productivity might be an important factor in the teaching of writing. Yet, investigating its importance in the classroom involved many difficulties ranging from how to determine appropriate productivity requirements to how to respond to students' need in a composition course to do more than produce, that is, the need to also study and practice the conventions and presentational aspects of written discourse.

I finally based my investigation on a course design predicated on Boice's notion of "a regimen of daily preoccupation with writing." This design relied heavily on the work of such teachers as Graves, Murray, and others who advocate frequent practice with largely self-sponsored writing, free writing, journal writing, or the like. Clearly many other course designs might have been workable so long as they would have permitted students large amounts of regular practice over a significant period of time.

At the beginning of the semester I wrote my students a long letter that I began by explaining my basic position on the teaching of writing. I then outlined for them two types of writing they could expect to do during the semester: daily writing and polished writing. For the daily writing the emphasis was to be on production, on quantity. The requirement was to write each work day, five days a week, on a topic of choice for an audience of peers and the teacher in the role of colleague. Evaluation of the daily writing was based on a quota system ranging from 500 words daily for an A down to 350 words daily for a passing grade. I outlined for them two purposes for this daily writing: 1) to help develop fluency through regular writing practice, and 2) to provide a stock of material from which individual pieces might be selected for revision.

For the polished writing the emphasis was to be on revision and the presentation of writing to a critical audience (including the teacher as evaluator). This aspect of the course design was quite conventional. At various times during the semester, students were asked to select a daily writing and then consider it – with help from their peers and from me – in terms of either an expressive, explanatory, or persuasive aim. These aims, which I adapted from Kinneavy and related sources such as the National Assessment for Educational Progress, were the subject of several class periods of lecture and discussion leading to the construction of analytic scales for use in evaluating final polished writings. There were also many class periods given over to editing and the conventions of written discourse. It was certainly not the case that an emphasis on productivity meant that traditional values and issues in writing instruction, such as audience, purpose, style, and correctness, had to be slighted.

In the case of both daily and polished writing most classwork centered on the students reading and responding to each other's writing. I read and selectively responded to the students' writing on a weekly basis. My responses to the daily writing, as well as the responses provided by the students to each other, all focused on possibilities and strategies for revision. At the end of the semester I made a final evaluation based on my reading and rereading of each student's entire collection of daily writings. I evaluated each polished writing and graded it A-F based on one of the three analytic scales, one designed for expressive writing, one for explanatory, and one for persuasive.

What I have learned about productivity in the classroom so far is based on offering this course design to two groups of students. The first was a group of 18 junior composition students selected from a class of 25, and the second was a section of 19 freshman composition students. The students in the junior class, which was taught the semester prior to the freshman class, were required to complete 45 daily writings compared to the freshmen's 37. Another difference was that in the junior class most of the workshop periods leading to polished writings took place earlier in the term, whereas the freshmen did a greater portion of their writing and revising at the end of the term. In order to gather information about the effects of the productivity requirement I asked students to hand in weekly commentaries on their progress, lack of progress, successes, and problems. Early in my investigation, since I had no idea what questions to ask, the commentaries were open-ended. Later on I asked students to respond to specific questions. I also interviewed selected students.

Based on information gathered this way, plus the students' writing and performance, the following five-point profile of productivity in these classrooms emerges. In considering this profile it is important to keep in mind that it represents the results of an initial investigation. Although writers, writing teachers, and writing theorists are often proponents of frequent writing experiences for students, the effects of productivity levels as high as

those I established for my students have not been widely tested, nor have optimum levels of productivity been established for writing instruction. Indeed, given the range of ways that "instruction" is interpreted by composition teachers in this country,[3] it does not seem likely that widely applicable guidelines will be forthcoming in the near future. However, it is possible to open the discussion on such issues by investigating the impact productivity has on student performance and attitudes, by discovering whether forcing productivity is workable in the classroom, and determining whether it shows potential for helping students develop as writers.

1. *Pressure Created by the Productivity Requirement Thrust a Need for Details About the Writing Process to the Center of the Class Agenda.*

In both these groups students came to class with pressing questions about how writers work. These were not questions about mechanics or conventions, but rather more fundamental and decidedly urgent questions about finding topics, managing time, dealing with interruptions, delays, and lack of motivation. Thus, early on, these aspects of the writing process became important subject matter for the course. Some of the problems the students were having could, of course, be dealt with in straight-forward ways, such as short demonstrations on prewriting techniques. Some problems, though, could only be dealt with as problems without easy solutions, requiring sometimes lengthy classroom discussions followed by trial and error learning. For example, students needed to learn that time management, finding or making the time to write, is a commitment each writer, if he or she is to be a writer, must make in his or her own way. Complex difficulties such as this one also offered me an opportunity to share the expertise of various teachers and researchers who have not only studied the writing process, but have studied it in academic and social contexts.

Thus, it turned out that "How can I get my kids to leave me alone so I can do my writing?" is at least as pressing a question about the writing process as "How can I revise this passage?" Ironically, what had been – at least in part – an effort to get beyond the "writing process," had the initial effect of pushing both students and teacher into the most fundamental issues of process.

2. *The Students Could Meet the Productivity Requirements.*

Since many teachers are skeptical about their students' ability to produce large amounts of writing largely on their own, it is important to note that while student questions and concerns for information about various aspects of the writing process were urgent, they were not desperate. Very soon after the beginning of the semester the students in both classes discovered they could – with varying amounts of difficulty – meet the productivity requirements. By the end of the semester, in the junior class, 15 of 18 completed all the work required for an A or B for the daily writing segment of the course. In the freshman course, 16 of 19 completed. This rate of successful completion is typical for many composition classes, so it may be the case that productivity requirements similar to the ones I established for these students will challenge, but will not disrupt either teacher or student expectations for class success rates.

In both classes the students experienced varying degrees of difficulty with the productivity requirement. In the junior class, 11 of the 15 finishers avoided writing for periods of five or more days at least once during the semester, and some students fell so far behind that they needed to resort to heroic measures to catch up. The freshman class revealed a similar pattern.

In written commentaries, the students gave several reasons for having problems here, including matters of personal temperament, work and class schedules, illness, etc. Most of the students who did not succeed pointed to their lack of ability to deal with what they perceived to be an unstructured academic situation.

It is worth noting that problems of this sort, from distractions to the inability to self-sponsor a task, are too often overlooked by teachers and researchers, are not considered significant, or are neutralized by teacher-centered controls, schedules, or directions. However, if we want to understand and to teach the writer's work in a fuller social and academic context, these are issues we need to consider because they profoundly affect students' behavior and performance.

3. *Students Wrote Primarily in the Expressive Aim.*

Based on my own analysis, in the junior class, out of a total of 939 writings, 671 of them were predominantly expressive, 127 predominantly explanatory, 37 predominantly persuasive, and 104 were stories. In the freshman class, out of 694 writings, 549 were predominantly expressive, 112 predominantly explanatory, 28 predominantly persuasive, and 5 were stories.[4] Even though such a preoccupation with expressive writing is to be expected, it does create a problem for the composition teacher who wants students to have experience with a range of forms. Despite the fact that the course design I used required that students be allowed to pursue their own aims in writing for an audience of their peers and their teacher, traditionally writing teachers have been very successful directing students into prescribed rhetorical situations and categories of discourse, so course designs should not be wanting to solve this problem.

4. *The Students' Perceptions of Their Growth as Writers Centered Mainly on a Sense of Increased Confidence and Power.*

It is widely recognized that many students enter writing classes with a heavy freight of fear, doubt, or unrealistic expectations. It is less widely recognized, but nonetheless important to know, that students also begin a writing course with an abundance of energy. In fact, this sense of renewal at the beginning of each term and the expectation of a new beginning is one of the guarantees that makes academic life attractive to both students and teachers. If productivity requirements are structured so that the bulk of the writing is done early in the semester, this initial burst of energy, if nurtured well, can carry even inexperienced writers a long way.

Over the first three weeks of daily writing, students in both classes indicated that after some initial hesitations, doubts, and fears, they began to experience a growing sense of power over their writing. This empowerment included less fear, greater ease in finding topics, greater fluency, and greater control. Greater control was manifested by a variety of comments referring to such simple factors as physical conditioning ("I can tell that my fingers don't tire so easily and ideas flow pretty freely") to more complex matters such as solving personal problems that distracted from finding the time or the concentration to write. A small and varying percentage of the students continued to have scheduling, fluency, and invention problems at the end of three weeks, as well as during the whole semester, but the fact that there was a high rate of successful completion strongly suggests that most students overcame these obstacles.

At about the six-week mark, though it varied, students in both classes became noticeably aware of the rhythm of writing regularly and became concerned about the unpredictable nature of the process. Many students continued to talk about various

kinds of distractions. One student, for example, wrote of periodic "slumps," another about "hard and easy days," and yet another about week-long periods in which writing was more difficult than others. Even though at first glance such observations on the part of students might seem trivial, my suspicion is that this aspect of productivity is very important. It is certainly the case, as Phillip Lopate has pointed out, that we need to teach students to be aware of when they have the power to make a maximum effort. On the other hand, it is also important for us to teach students that avoidance and waiting for a "good feeling" are not productive.

From the six- through the nine-week point the commentaries of the two classes diverged a great deal, primarily because the freshmen, at six weeks, were just emerging from a completed polished writing and the juniors were in the middle of a period of revising workshops.

The dominant response from the freshmen was increased confidence in their ability to renew their daily writing efforts, perhaps because that activity, which had seemed alien at first, was now familiar when compared to the rigors of revising and polishing. Many students at this point speculated about the direction in which they wanted to take their writing. One student who opened with an explanatory polished piece plotted this strategy: "I think I might try to get away from the technical subject matter for a few days or so. Hopefully, I'll be able to get back to the more people-related subjects for a change." Another student said at this point:

> As far as my stress level goes, it has dramatically decreased. I don't freak out as much like I used to in the beginning. I'm not exactly sure why; probably because I'm just getting used to writing a lot. Also, I don't worry about not having anything to write any more. I just try not to think about it until I'm actually sitting down and getting ready to write.

These two comments were typical of many which, at this point, focused on the details of getting the work done. The freshmen had progressed a long way from their initial anxieties and first successes and were beginning to think, in many ways, like writers.

By contrast, in the junior class, with a different schedule and a higher productivity requirement, the biggest difficulty at this point was "lack of time." That is, the students didn't feel as if they could get to their writing because of class conflicts, home and work responsibilities, etc. Again, while there is a temptation for teachers and researchers to discount such problems as irrelevant, in fact they are an important part of establishing a productive writing pattern for college students. To ignore these factors and to consider students' writing apart from the context of such variables provides us with information that is not clearly applicable to either academic or non-academic writing situations. It is always easier to do anything than write. What makes a writer is making the time and getting the work done, and teaching this basic skill, however we may do it, and difficult as it is, may turn out to be one of our most important tasks.

The end of the daily writing for both groups involved the drudgery of getting caught up or finishing, the euphoria of putting down a large task, and a wide variety of feelings which may be easily imagined. Most of all, the students were very glad to have the pressure of daily writing behind them, although not always without a sense that they had gained something in the course of their difficulties. For example, here are comments made by two students in the junior class:

> My writing is going much better now. I'm learning about myself now. I'm becoming able to express my feelings better, and I'm more able to write with length.

Or:

> Practice. Routine. I have gotten into a routine for writing. I need several hours basically without interruption. And I've found that I have to turn the radio off. It's too intrusive. That's strange for me because I always have music playing.

In answer to my direct questions eight out of the eighteen writers in the junior course reported all positive feeings at the close of the daily writing, while eight reported a mixture of positive and negative feelings, for example, "At this time I don't want to hear the words daily writing. My writing in general for other classes, I think, is more confident." Two students reported all negative feelings.

Also in response to my questions, twelve students said they felt that their writing or writing ability had improved during the course of the daily writing. Five had mixed feelings, and one had negative feeings. Positive comments ranged from a sense of being able to work in greater detail, to a sense of having developed a writer's "habit of mind," to one student's feeling that the experience of daily writing had turned around a lifetime of bad writing experiences. Perhaps most significantly, two-thirds of the writers in the junior class specifically reported an increase in confidence in their writing and a positive change in their perceptions of themselves as writers.

Just as we tend to ignore students' problems with distractions and conflicts as central points for our teaching, we also tend to dismiss the importance of information concerning how students feel about themselves as writers. Perhaps this is because we wrongly believe that our students are not capable of thinking of themselves as writers—or even because we are incapable of thinking of our students as writers. Whatever the case, even though to a certain extent such affective aspects of our students' lives are beyond our control, if we fail to understand the importance of such issues and fail to account for them in research and teaching, then we run the risk of failing to make our classrooms places where whole persons, not just students, come to study. And this is not to suggest that students should "feel good" all the time either. Learning to write, like any other process of growing, sometimes must be uncomfortable.

It was much harder to judge the responses of the freshman students at the end of the daily writing because, whereas the juniors were completely finished, the freshmen were still deeply involved in the processes of revising and polishing. This detail of course structure had the effect of encouraging the freshmen to continue to look—as we certainly want students to look—at their daily writing with an eye toward revision. For example, one student said of his daily writings at this point, "they are not that good, but many are raw potential polished writings and can easily be worked upon." Overall, among the freshmen, there were no students who reported all positive or negative feelings at the end of the daily writing. Because of the way the course was structured, these students tended to take more balanced views toward the daily writing, understanding it in the context of the revising process and as just one part of their growth as writers.

5. *Students' Perceptions of Success and Failure Extended Beyond Concern for both Process and Product.*

The last thing I asked students in both classes to do was to list for me and later discuss what they believed to be the most

important reasons for their success or failure. Here, in descending order of frequency, are the reasons for success identified by the juniors:

1. Self-Discipline, Perseverance
2. Liking to Write and Getting Readers' Responses
3. Finding the Time to Write
4. External Constraints (e.g., the Fear of Failing)
5. Absence of Editorial Constraints in the Daily Writing
6. Being Able to Find the Right Topics

Following are the reasons for failure. Each of the three students who did not complete the daily writing contributed one:

1. Lack of Time
2. Lack of Effort
3. Getting Behind

Perhaps due to the freshman students' preoccupation with revision, their reasons for success differed from those of the juniors. Six out of the nineteen students spoke specifically about the importance of "getting comfortable" with daily writing and the workshop process, becoming "familiar" with the personal and rhetorical demands of daily writing, etc. Students saw this process of acculturation – or conditioning, if you will – as being central to their becoming able to "see themselves" as writers. Here are the reasons for success identified by the freshmen. The final two items in the following list of reasons for success were each identified by one student.

1. Liking to write and/or becoming adjusted to the writing processes demanded by the class
2. Increasing awareness of self as a writer
3. Freedom from editorial constraints in the daily writing
4. Working in the Writing Center
5. Being able to use a word processor

And here are the reasons for failure noted by the freshmen:

1. Lack of Time
2. Lack of Motivation
3. Distractions
4. Inability to Type

One thing that should give us cause to ponder these lists is that the reasons identified as leading to success are not matters that are usually given strong emphasis in composition courses or texts. However, once productivity becomes a leading requirement, matters such as these begin to occupy the center of students' attention and class discussion. Students come to want to know and need to know not so much what their writing should look like or what the teacher's expectations are, but how to work on their writing, and even how to work on themselves in the process.

And what to me is particularly striking about the reasons for failure is that they seem so mundane and unimportant when compared with the sophisticated issues on which teachers and researchers usually focus. Not so, apparently.

"The Writer's Practice"

Even though this profile suggests that the students in these two classes prospered while laboring under a regimen of daily production, it is not immediately clear what portion of that prosperity was due to the productivity requirement and how much was due to other factors. Furthermore, given the nature of this investigation, it is not possible to make any statements about such matters of interest as the relative quality of the students' writing or growth in writing ability. However, it is possible to focus on several points that suggest that productivity, when considered in the context of a whole course of study, can be viewed as a strongly positive factor leading toward students' development as writers.

First of all is the point that it was clearly the productivity requirement and the initial pressure it put on students that led them, primarily on their own, to ask questions about the writing process and to seek out useful composing techniques. It is sometimes the case in the classroom that students have difficulty understanding the relevance of various points of instruction about the writing process. The productivity requirement, in effect, created a context in which students needed that instruction and sought it out – from me, from their peers, or by examining their own efforts. This kind of self-motivated learning, even in the presence of an external constraint like the productivity requirement, is very powerful and in the long run may serve students very well.

The second point is the primarily positive effects the productivity requirement had on the students' control of their writing and their senses of themselves as writers. The least I can conclude at this point is that productivity in the classroom does not have the negative effects many teachers suppose attach to such a seemingly unpleasant teaching approach. A more positive conclusion is that the daily writing and the productivity requirement – as the students testified – made an important difference, and that effects like increased confidence, improved self discipline for writing, the development of a writer's "habit of mind," and so forth are, in fact, key outcomes in a composition class.

The third point is that the demands of productivity did force the students, as writers, to recognize the importance of factors for success in writing beyond (but not necessarily excluding) those usually recognized by teachers and researchers. These productive writers came to know, in a way other students may not, that understanding some version of the writing process or some formula will carry them only so far. It is the case at least that these students by the end of the semester not only recognized the importance of understanding processes and the presentation of written products, but placed an even higher premium on such values as writing enjoyment, readers' responses, and awareness of themselves as writers.

The fourth point is that this profile is not so different after all from what we know of the practices of successful writers. For example, the attitudes and skills Donald Murray identifies as "a writer's secrets" such as developing the discipline for daily writing, establishing time for writing, and establishing a writer's habits of mind and action all seem to be accessible to students who become productive writers. Unfortunately, in too many classrooms where productivity is not required, students rarely have an opportunity to push far enough into the craft of writing to discover what is most important to them. Just as Boice claims fluency and creativity begin with productivity, so also might an enlarged and more richly contextualized understanding of process.

And this raises a final point. Instead of focusing narrowly on any single factor in writing instruction such as process or product, it might be productive to think more broadly in terms of the writer's whole practice and then to consider separate factors in that context. The practice of writing certainly does involve study of the writing process, but it also requires such things as the establishment of convivial relationships with other writers, the taking of responsibility, and – I am beginning to believe – it also requires productivity and the values that attend it. If any

one factor unduly predominates, the sense of the whole practice is easily lost.

One useful analogy to draw here is between writing practice and religious practice or athletic practice. When we speak of someone as practicing religion, for example, the idea of practice extends beyond mere membership in some religious group, financial contributions, or participation in ceremony and rituals. The term practice, as I am using it, suggests an extensive and intensive range of activities and states of mind that interpenetrate with the practitioner's sense of himself or herself. Any kind of serious practice is a day by day discipline which is maintained amid countless distractions. This sense of practice is indeed a secret held by many practicing writers, and as they know and my students know, productivity has an important, but not the only, part to play in it.

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Notes

[1]At the 1987 CCCC in Atlanta, Louise Wetherbee Phelps extended this critique in a new direction by suggesting that research also distorts the role time plays in composing. Many researchers make only short, timed episodes the object of study and ignore the fact that much writing gets done only after periods of days, weeks, months, or even years elapse.

[2]The dispute over quantity and quality is one I can't hope to resolve. It is a product of the tendency the western mind has to create dualisms and then mount arguments for and against each member. What this dispute ignores is the fact that neither quantity nor quality excludes the importance of the other—at least not in the practical world of the composition classroom. Consequently, when working with my students I often find myself uttering such bits of wisdom as "A cook must cook well and cook enough," or "You've got to lay a lot of bricks to be a lot of bricklayer."

[3]See, for example, George Hillock's *Research on Written Composition*, especially the sections on modes of instruction.

[4]I based this analysis on Kinneavy's understanding of the aims of discourse. For a practical rendering of the types of writing I assigned to each category consult the diagram on p. 61 of *A Theory of Discourse*.

THE KNACK FOR ART: THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE OF COMBINING STRATEGIES OF INVENTION

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Perhaps nothing affects our attitudes and beliefs about what can and should be done in a writing classroom more than the way in which we characterize for ourselves the respective roles of reason and imagination in the process of writing. In fact, broaching the subject of my essay in these terms recalls ancient concepts of rhetoric still durable despite our suspicions about the limitations of dualistic thinking. Thus whenever we are sympathetic to Aristotle's point of view that rhetoric is an "art" whose principles are susceptible to analysis, we may emphasize to our students the power of systematic discovery procedures, heuristics not unlike Aristotelian *topoi*. On the other hand, whenever we recall Plato's characterization of rhetoric as a "knack," derived from talent and experience,[1] we may eschew systems and insist with William Coles that "the only way one learns to write is by writing" (112).

Howsoever our sympathies guide us—whether we align ourselves with those rhetoricians who are "new classicists" or those who are "new romantics," to borrow more contemporary terms from Frank D'Angelo and Richard Young (Young, "Concepts" 132, 134)—we usually maintain that these contrasting perspectives do not so much describe exclusive views but complementary ones, both of which legitimate within shifting and inexhaustible contextual domains. In short, contrasting perspectives suggest the possibility of *dialectical* rather than exclusive relationships, which on the surface offers an elegant vehicle for reconceiving a stale dualism. But in the ordinary way of things we cannot look in two directions at once, and having to gaze first in one direction forever colors alternative vistas—especially in this case: for the themes of this particular set of contrasts bring with them a residue, a history of pejorative usages that often leads us to marginalize one side of our provisional dialectic, sometimes for good reasons. Thus it is not surprising to find W. Ross Winterowd arguing in a recent essay that vitalism (the term through which he thematizes one side of these contrasting perspectives)[2]

> makes composition essentially unteachable, though not unlearnable, for "instructors" can give students "invitations" to use language, to embark, that is, on linguistic voyages of discovery, or, perhaps, more appropriately, to start combining elements in various ways to find out what will result. ("Purification" 269)

Winterowd makes these remarks in passing, and they form only part of a broadly based argument meant to show that composi-