

Experiences with Personal, Academic, and Hybrid Writing: A Study of Two High School Seniors

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on two high school seniors as they wrote in their British Literature and Psychology classes. We analyse the writing experiences of the two volunteer students as they produced formal academic writing (research, essays, and synopses), personal writing (poems, stories, and personal narratives), and hybrid writing (research written in the form of a letter to a classmate). The primary data came from concurrent and retrospective protocols produced by the two students in relation to their writing. Additional data sources – classroom observations, the teacher's teaching journal, curriculum materials, and the students' writing portfolios – helped to contextualise their writing. Through the protocol analysis we found that the students' academic writing was often a frustrating experience due to their efforts to take on the authoritative voice of their sources; their personal writing was more satisfying and engaging because they could rely on familiar events and a more fluent voice for expression; and the hybrid writing allowed them to engage with the content of formal research with the comfortable voice of their personal writing.

I like to write personal experiences and things that I have in my head and stuff. I liked it a lot.

Ok, we are going to go ahead and start this [research] paper. This is going to be one damn good paper. I am just kidding. I don't even care. That is terrible. I always care, and I don't care. Shit.

Gail

These expressions of satisfaction and frustration come from one of the two young women who volunteered to participate in our study of their writing during their senior year of high school. The statements, taken from protocols produced in relation to Gail's writing, illustrate what we found to be typical of their experiences with what we call personal writing (pieces of their choice, often fiction or poetry) and academic writing (research, essays, and synopses of films). While personal writing was often a source of satisfaction for these students, their academic writing could drive even the deeply devout Gail to profanity.

Writing theorists and teachers have long noted the discrepant experiences that students have with different types of writing. Emig (1971) makes a distinction between *school-sponsored* and *self-sponsored* writing, arguing that virtually all writing required in school forces students into forms and topics that they find uninteresting, alienating, and disaffecting. More recently, Blau (2003) argues that many students

see academic work as something like factory work, a job to be finished ... [T]he problem of disengaged students can also be one fostered by writing assignments into which students are unable to read themselves ... If we are getting derivative, disengaged, perfunctory, or ignorantly pompous papers ... from our students, we should ask ourselves what we are doing to deserve such papers. (pp. 153-154)

Blau (2003) is concerned that school and university students are obligated to take on artificial voices that are painful for them to assume and equally painful for teachers to read. As a result, students develop a 'self-defeating ambition to adopt an alienating and falsely elevated discourse' in their writing (p. 161) that prohibits them from 'trust[ing their] own voice' (p. 162) in their academic work. Blau and his fellow critics are troubled that the writing required of students in school stifles them in terms of their ideas, the forms that restrict their ideas, and the voices through which they express themselves.

Yet producing writing according to the expectations for an academic voice is required in many educational settings (Beck 2006); and the higher the educational level, the more likely a writer will be expected to follow particular conventions (Prior 1998). Given the conflict between personal and academic voices that shows little sign of abating or being resolved, teachers are faced with a conundrum: If many writing theorists and practitioners value vivid, personal voices in writing, yet the academy has historically required adherence to formal conventions, how do teachers balance the need between teaching academic conventions and allowing for personal expression?

Like many arguments in education, the one between personal and academic writing relies on binary distinctions between two polar perspectives. Using Nystrand's (1986) social-interactive conception of the structure of written composition, we seek to find a way to explain the polarity without accepting the binary. Nystrand argues that texts do not have inherent qualities. Rather, his notion of effective writing relies on the '**Reciprocity Principle**, which is the foundation of all social acts,

including discourse: *In any collaborative activity the participants orient their actions on certain standards which are taken for granted as rules of conduct by the social group to which they belong*' (p. 48; emphasis in original). He continues, 'writers and readers are not so much right or wrong in their expression and interpretations as they are *in or out of tune with each other*' (p. 74; emphasis in original).

What determines this degree of congruence over expectations is the context of literacy activity. As many rhetoricians have noted, standards for writing vary from discipline to discipline, work site to work site, reader to reader (see, e.g., the contributors to Bazerman & Paradis 1991). It is incumbent on writers, then, to understand what their anticipated readers expect of them in terms of formal conventions, the use of particular elements of a given genre, the degree to which a particular voice is appropriate for the occasion, and other considerations that contribute to a writer's being in tune with the reader's rhetorical expectations; unless, of course, the writer's purpose is to disrupt those norms or otherwise defy convention.

The setting of school tends to be a site for homogenising student writing. While many educators have advocated a role for personal writing in middle and high schools, the more common emphasis is on what many refer to as 'academic' writing. Applebee (1981, 1984, 1993) has documented the prevalence of academic writing in his studies of composition and literature instruction. He notes that textbooks, teachers, and curricula gravitate toward formality and allow few options for students in their thinking or writing.

As a way to resolve the conundrum that teachers face in considering the relative needs for personal and academic writing, a number of researchers have explored the possibilities of encouraging hybrid forms. Such opportunities are ripe to occur in what Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejada's (1999) term the 'third space'. While the first two social spaces – official and unofficial – are the domains of teachers and students respectively, the third space is an improvisational, unscripted classroom space in which mutual influence is available. Creating alternative spaces in the classroom, then, invites possibilities that are not accessible when the teacher's expectations for academic writing predominate.

In this study we rely primarily on concurrent and retrospective protocol analysis to understand the writing experiences of two high school seniors – Gail and Clara – in relation to the writing instruction of

their English teacher, co-author Cindy O'Donnell-Allen and their Psychology teacher Carla Rogers. (All names of people and places except Cindy's are pseudonyms.) Gail and Clara volunteered for the research along with several other students, but were the only ones who recorded think-aloud protocols while writing for their teachers. Because the protocols served as the primary data for this study, we focused on these two students and so are not able to include a broad, diverse range of students in our sample.

Adopting the perspective taken by those who argue that learning is always situated in a social context (e.g., Cole 1996, Moll 1990, Rogoff 1990), we study the students' situated writing in the setting of their high school, with particular attention to the environment provided by Cindy's, and to a lesser extent Ms Rogers's, teaching. We focus especially on their experiences in writing on topics and in forms of their personal choice, which came to them relatively easily and fluently; writing formal academic papers, during which they expressed great frustration in giving voice to the information they reported; and writing hybrid research papers in which they explored and related their investigative topics in vernaculars with which they were comfortable and familiar. Specifically, we investigate the following question: *How do the two focal students experience personal, academic, and hybrid writing in relation to one another and to the instructional context?*

Method

Data collection

The research was set in the high school senior British Literature class of teacher and co-author Cindy O'Donnell-Allen. We also were able to collect data from, although not observe, the Psychology class that Gail and Clara took from Ms Rogers. The students' mutual enrolment in these two writing-intensive classes was coincidental and not evident until we began the data analysis several years after the collection. By this time both the first and third authors had moved to different parts of the US, and we were able to reconstruct Ms Rogers's classroom in far less detail than we could for that of Cindy, who was involved in the study from its inception.

The full range of data consulted for the study included the following sources.

Classroom data

Data from Cindy's classroom were used primarily to

provide the context for the students' writing. These data included:

- field notes from weekly observations of the English class during the second semester.
- an interview with Cindy about her approach to teaching the class, and her subsequent contributions as co-author.
- copies of all handouts that Cindy provided her students, including a class syllabus, class policies, writing group response sheets, reading log instructions, writer's notebook guidelines, a student interest questionnaire, and quizzes and tests.
- documents related to students' progress in the writing workshop, including records for setting and meeting goals and Cindy's notes from student writing conferences.

Data on student writing

Verbal data. We collected two types of students' speech in relation to their writing. These data included:

- *situated, concurrent (i.e., think-aloud) protocols* from Gail and Clara. Gail produced two protocols, both at home, while writing a research report on Anne Boleyn. One protocol captured her while reviewing notes, the other came three days later while writing a draft based on the notes. Clara provided four separate protocols at home, each on separate days: while writing a research report on artist Joseph Albers, while writing an essay on ageing for Psychology, while writing a summary of a film on brain maturation in babies for Psychology, and while planning a story about the relationship between two sisters for her own purposes. We did not control the conditions of the protocols – that is, the students were issued tape recorders and asked to think aloud while composing as often as possible. As a result of the open-ended nature of the research conditions, the protocols that Gail and Clara provided were not produced in conjunction with the same writing.
- *retrospective protocols* with both students based on their writing portfolios, which included their writing during British Literature (including writing workshops) for the whole school year.

Written data. These data included the writing produced by both students during the year (including drafts and responses from Cindy and peers). This writing was comprised of journal entries, personal narratives, short

stories, poetry, reading logs and other literary responses, class discussion notes, literary analyses, vocabulary worksheets and quizzes, literary content worksheets and assessments, and research papers.

Data analysis

The classroom data served to establish the setting for the students' writing and therefore the context of the investigation. The primary data analysed for the study were the concurrent and retrospective protocols.

Protocol analysis

The protocols were collaboratively analysed by the first two authors, and their analysis was reviewed and verified by Cindy. The question of reliability through independent coding was thus addressed in that we discussed each coding decision until we agreed on how a unit of text should be coded. The full set of codes and their frequencies is listed in Table 1. Our major coding categories identified students' *negative* and *positive affect* when writing, the students' *goals* in terms of their *reader(s)* and *selves*, and the type of *voice (academic or personal)* that we could identify in the protocols. Each of these major categories included particular codes, which we outline next.

Affect-negative. This category includes two codes, *antipathy toward writing* and *stress/anxiety*. An example of a writer experiencing stress comes from Clara's concurrent protocol as she produced a synopsis of a film for Psychology class: 'I don't want to do this. I don't know she'll count off. This is over a week late anyway. I was supposed to do it a week and a half ago and I didn't. I have an in-class assignment. So, that means I have to go in early tomorrow morning and do that. I don't want to do it. I don't want to do it. Okay, synopsis. Let's start by - I don't want to do this. I don't know how to get this little information into a long, page thing.' Because the different expressions of frustration all concerned the same writing decision, we coded this segment only once for *stress/anxiety*.

Affect-positive. Positive affect codes came when the writers indicated that they used writing to mediate their emotions, exhibited enjoyment in their writing, expressed interest in their topics, revealed that they were learning about themselves through writing, demonstrated that they were learning about their topic through writing, or found that their writing was relevant to their personal lives. Gail, for instance, revealed

Table 1: Protocol Analysis

Code	Clara	Gail	Total
Affect – Negative			
Antipathy toward writing	7	4	11
Stress/anxiety	4	8	12
Affect – Positive			
Emotional mediation	1	2	3
Enjoyment in writing	2	9	11
Interest in topic	1	8	9
Investment in writing	1	6	7
Learning about self	1	4	5
Learning about topic	1	5	6
Relevance to personal life	0	6	6
Goal – Reader			
Attend to form	5	10	15
Be clear/specific	0	4	4
Generate details/ideas	1	1	2
Organise material/ideas	1	4	5
Persuade reader	3	0	3
Report information correctly	7	9	16
Satisfy teacher	12	2	14
Produce appropriate content	6	4	10
Goal – Self			
Express self	2	0	2
Relate personal experience	2	0	2
Write narrative that informs content	0	4	4
Voice			
Formal/academic	14	4	18
Informal/colloquial	18	16	34

during her retrospective protocol that she enjoyed writing workshop portions of British Literature: 'I liked it a lot when we first did it in the first semester ... I wrote a lot.'

Goal-reader. The participants engaged in goal-directed action through their writing. Many of these goals were oriented to their reader(s), often the teacher but at times including a broader audience. Readerly goals – those that helped to bring them in tune with their reader's expectations – included attention to form, clarity/specificity, generating details or ideas, organising their writing, persuading their reader, reporting information correctly, satisfying their teacher, and producing appropriate content. While preparing to work on her research paper on Anne Boleyn, for instance, Gail began by organising her ideas: 'I am doing a senior paper, no a research paper on Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII, and I am just right now going over my notes and stuff because I have got to put a rough draft together. I am just going to read through them and organise my thoughts and try to come up with a thesis or some kind of main idea or position that I am going to take in this paper.' Because the idea of a 'thesis' was

required in the assignment, we coded this as a readerly goal during which she was *organising her writing* according to a main idea.

Goal-self. In addition to these reader-related goals, the participants developed goals for themselves in relation to their writing, although as Table 1 reveals, their self-oriented goals surfaced far less often than did goals established with their reader(s) in mind. Their self-oriented goals concerned efforts to express themselves, relate personal experiences, and write narratives that informed the content of their writing. Clara, for instance, described one piece from her portfolio, written during a writing workshop, in her retrospective protocol: 'It was a Mexico trip that I took when I was 14, and I just wrote about what all we did and stuff. That is about all. It was just about Mexico and me going to Mexico ... It just tells like basically what, you know, I did and what it meant to me.'

Voice. Voice codes were either formal/academic or informal/colloquial. We coded a protocol segment as formal/academic when the student worked to articulate her ideas in what she considered to be appropriate academic language. Gail, for instance, produced the following during a concurrent protocol, seeking to convert her notes into formal research writing: 'Her days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen - gosh, I can't get over this stump here. Anne's days as Queen were fought hard, no, were fought hard to obtain. There were days, Anne's days as Queen were fought hard to obtain. She is just known as Anne of a Thousand Days.'

Often while going through this struggle, the students relied on informal speech as a way of working toward or commenting on their formal expression. Gail illustrates this effort when saying, 'gosh, I can't get over this stump here'. A more detailed example comes from Clara's italicised comments below, which came in the context of her attempt to write a film synthesis for Psychology:

Okay, let's talk about the mind and performing to be active. Use it or lose it. That's good, let's see. It is a good way in an older person to keep a perspective, to keep the brain mentally active that if you don't use your brain, it will become weak. Your brain, it will become dead. Your brain, it will come become space. [inaudible] A woman who is quite proud of being 90¹/₂ years old has been mountain climbing for over or about 25 years more or less. Yeah, right, they say she started over in her 60s so that would make it at least 25 years! That's right.

Illustration of coding system. An example of coded text follows. During her concurrent protocol while writing a film synopsis for Psychology, Clara said,

Let's see, how is - let's not start with 'how'. Why is ageing different for some people than others? Why is ageing for some people different than for others? Let's see, write that down. Who cares? OK. Coming out with the genetic complement in Alzheimer's. Does something trigger the onset of it, a virus, diet, or is it just automatic? Because if it is genetic, that is strange that identical twins wouldn't get it. OK, why is ageing for some people different than for others? Than for - that's what the difference is, than for the others. Are our genes unfolding as our lives go on? Our genes - crap. Are our genes unfolding as our life goes on or does something trigger the onset of them? OK.

We coded this segment as follows:

Affect-negative: Clara's remarks, 'Who cares?' and 'Crap' suggest that she felt *antipathy toward writing* the synopsis.

Affect-positive: Because Clara clarified her understanding of ageing through writing the synopsis, we coded this segment for *learning about topic*.

Goal-reader: This excerpt shows Clara attempting to *be clear* about the ideas she is relating, *organise ideas* in determining how to start the summary, *report information correctly* by clarifying for herself the ideas in the film, and *satisfy [the] teacher* by following the assignment.

Voice: We coded this segment for both *formal/academic* and *informal/colloquial* voices. The formal voice came through her phrasing of what she wrote, and she expressed her informal voice when talking with herself about the quality of her experience ('Who cares?') and when sorting through the ideas prior to writing them down.

Context of the investigation

School and community

The research took place in a large (1,662 students) two-year senior high school in the American Southwest. The school was the only high school in a college town of about 90,000 residents located roughly 20 miles from a large city. Most students and faculty were European American, with the largest minority groups among the students being Native American and African American. The high school's faculty as a whole endeavoured to

satisfy the community's interest in maintaining conventional indicators of quality such as high standardised test scores.

Cindy's class

At the time of the research, Cindy O'Donnell-Allen was in her late twenties and in her fifth year of teaching. She was working on a master's degree in English Education at a large state university where she had also studied for her undergraduate degree; as an undergraduate she had won the college's competitive and prestigious Outstanding Senior award. Cindy had begun her career as a speech teacher, an assignment that, along with her mother's career as a kindergarten teacher, gave her a broader view of what is possible in an English class than many of her colleagues shared. Still, she characterised her earliest efforts at teaching English as a 'more traditional approach'. During the year of data collection, Cindy was in the process of experimenting with instruction that broke with these traditions.

The class under study was a senior year course in British Literature, taught during the school's daily 55-minute periods. Cindy missed the beginning of the school year while home on maternity leave, and during the spring semester she co-taught the class with a student teacher. Her syllabus described her organisation of the curriculum as follows:

Each nine weeks, the first half of each quarter will be devoted to Writing Workshop, and the second half will be devoted to the thematic study of literature. Depending on the task at hand, the format of the class will vary but will include the following:

Writing Workshop: mini-lessons on writing, individual writing time, peer and teacher conferences, group share/publishing opportunities

Literature: individual written responses, small group and class discussions, group projects and presentations, individual presentations, and an occasional lecture.

We next describe these two formats in greater detail, first the writing workshop and second the more conventional, though relatively unconventional, study of British Literature and the response opportunities that Cindy provided.

Writing workshop

Cindy's early efforts to distance herself from traditional teaching were grounded in part with her dissatisfaction with attending more to learning products than processes. This uneasiness led her to try portfolios in her writing instruction, which increased her interest in writing process theories. From the portfolio approach

she gravitated to the workshop method, primarily as outlined by Atwell (1987), from whom she borrowed general procedures that she adapted to her own personality and situation. Atwell outlines a role for the teacher that gets her out from behind the 'big desk' (p. 3) and out among students as a fellow writer and supportive critic. Cindy said that Atwell's 'structure was real helpful to me as I was getting organised. Since then I don't know that any writing workshop looks the same in one classroom as it would in any other because it probably has a lot to do with my personality as a teacher and the way I carry on the class'.

British Literature

When Cindy saw the course description and goals required for British Literature, she felt ambivalent about teaching the course as it was officially envisioned. Every other British Literature teacher in her department used a chronological approach because what Cindy termed their 'behemoth' anthology was organised as a survey of literary periods. Cindy believed that this organisation would make it difficult for her to teach British Literature in the thematic manner that she preferred.

In her thematic approach Cindy juxtaposed literature from various British eras with works from other nations and cultures. She said that 'the thematic arrangement increased the potential for relevance' to students' lives. She reflected her interpretation of the curriculum in the goals that she listed on her syllabus:

- to study British literature from early Anglo-Saxon writings through modern works, and related literature from other cultures
- to explore how this literature reveals our 'humaneness' on three basic levels: universal, cultural, and personal
- to examine how these writings relate to your personal quest for identity
- to expand your vocabulary, especially as it relates to literature.

Cindy provided explicit instruction in writing during the British Literature portion of each grading period. For instance, she instructed students in literary argumentation - particularly the claim/data/warrant structure - through activities borrowed from Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen (1984).

Bon Voyage Research Project

In November Cindy assigned the Bon Voyage research project (see Appendix for the assignment), dedicating

11 days of class time to both the teaching and writing of the paper. The students' work was documented in what Cindy called a Project Journal in which she could follow the process through which they generated their papers.

The idea behind the assignment was to teach students how to locate information for the purpose of reporting research. To facilitate a change in voice, Cindy had the students write the report in the form of a personal letter to a friend in the class. This shift in genre and audience encouraged students to share their information in familiar, conversational language of the sort that a peer would expect, appreciate, and respond to. The actual instruction in conducting research was fairly conventional; that is, the students were learning about how to use sources to write about a topic. Cindy hoped to encourage students to trust their own voices by shifting the genre from report to letter and readership from herself to a classroom friend. She anticipated that some degree of authenticity would follow from the relationship involved in the writing (friend to friend) and the social organisation of the classroom during instruction, which allowed for informal interchanges among students.

Psychology

Both Gail and Clara were enrolled in an elective course in Psychology, taught by Carla Rogers. Because our focus was on Cindy's class, we did not observe Ms Rogers's class. We were able to reconstruct her class to an extent through Gail's and Clara's accounts during their protocols.

Ms Rogers was, according to Cindy, among the school's most popular and highly respected teachers – a 'rock star', as Cindy characterised her local celebrity. She required a large amount of writing from her students. The class routinely watched films on human development (e.g., a film on ageing), and Ms Rogers would have her students write a synopsis of the film for homework. They thus had to take notes during the film for reconstruction in the synopsis. She also required that the students write a 'book' consisting of their own account of their life experiences. The students' work on this book was an extended process through which the students thought about, in Clara's words, 'who you are, and ... what are your activities and mementos'.

A final type of writing we found in the students' protocols was what Ms Rogers called an 'essay'. For instance, during a concurrent protocol Clara worked on an essay in response to the following prompt: 'By the

[end of the decade], one quarter of our country's population will be over the age of 65. Write an essay describing social, economic, and health implications of this statement.'

Results

We organise the results of our analysis into two case studies. Each case includes a profile of the student and an analysis of her experiences with personal, academic, and hybrid writing.

Gail

Gail was among the school's most accomplished athletes, earning a soccer scholarship to a US Division I university for the year following her high school graduation. The university was affiliated with its state's Baptist General Convention, a good fit with her family's strong Baptist faith.

Gail's class load for her senior year was a rigorous one that included Physics, AP Biology, British Literature, Psychology, Business Law, and Creative Writing. When asked about what kind of writing she did in classes other than English, Gail focused on her Psychology class, saying of the book that she wrote about herself, 'That is probably something that I will keep, probably for the rest of my life. Through that writing I learned a lot about myself.'

As the oldest of six children, Gail found that she never ran out of topics that she wanted to write about in her book, which was heavily laden with personal experiences that ranged from being in a large family to participating in all kinds of athletic events. Gail also had the unique family experience of having a mother who helped her children keep journals from a young age. Even before Gail could write, her mother helped her start her own journal by writing down what Gail said. This practice instilled in Gail an appreciation for writing as a method of personal reflection and as an important means of expression.

As a self-described procrastinator, Gail valued the check points that Ms Rogers built into the Psychology class book writing schedule because she found that she didn't 'put things off' or 'get bogged down' in the assignment. Gail noted that in British Literature she also valued the structure that Cindy provided for the class. Even though Gail wanted dependable classroom procedures and routines in place, she liked the freedom that the writing workshops provided her in choosing the genre appropriate for her topic and the content and voice available within each genre.

Personal writing

Gail saw a difference between personal and academic writing, saying during her retrospective protocol, 'I guess when I make creative writing, it is just kind of an expression of myself. When I make like a formal writing, it is, I mean, anybody can do that same piece of formal writing that I am doing ... I mean, anyone can like look in a book and research it and make it, but not everyone can write a poem and have the same feelings that I have when I am writing.' To Gail, academic writing consisted primarily of locating and reporting information, something that 'anybody can do' because the information will be the same for everyone who writes about it. Personal writing, in contrast, was more unique to her and her perspective, experiences, and approach to writing. This very uniqueness, she felt, made her personal writing almost immune to evaluation; her teacher 'couldn't grade the content really, because, you know, you were writing about yourself.' Cindy's approach of awarding points during writing workshop for attempted and completed efforts, rather than letter grades based on her own standards for quality, was a good fit with Gail's beliefs about her personal writing.

Gail elaborated on the value she placed on the freedoms available through the writing workshop, saying that

If we had questions, Ms McDonald was real, I mean she was real open. I mean, it was just, it wasn't real structured, if that makes sense. I mean, you write how you want to write. It wasn't like someone telling you, OK, you have to write this or write that. I mean, you have got to be your own kind of writer ... Everyone was different, because everyone had their own style. I mean, it wasn't like, okay, research that, and write it. You know, you could write a poem or you could write a story. I like that kind of freedom, how you can, because I don't like that real structured type of writing.

Gail contrasted the processes she used when working on personal and academic writing. For academic writing, she said, 'I make a rough draft and usually it pretty much stands. I don't really [revise it]. But with a creative writing assignment or something, I mean I could go back and change it. And change it and change it.' Her consistent testimony during her retrospective protocol regarding her willingness to produce and revise writing of her choice suggests that, particularly in contrast with her academic writing, she viewed personal writing as an occasion to employ what we coded as an informal or colloquial voice to express her

emotions, beliefs, ideas, and experiences. Her openness to revision further suggests that with personal writing she was more connected to the nuances of what she had experienced and felt. As a consequence she was more invested in reworking the language to capture those experiences and emotions. Her relative distance from both the topic and language of her academic writing, in contrast, produced less of a need to express the material in ways worthy of further refinement.

The coding of Gail's remarks about her personal writing identified an association between writing of her own choice and what we coded as positive affect. In identifying positive affect as an attribute, we are aligning ourselves with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) notion of happiness, which is less related to pleasure and more attuned to the profound sense of involvement and fulfilment of potential that people achieve through sustained work toward increasingly challenging goals. The descriptive statistics that follow from our codes demonstrate that affect-positive codes were almost exclusively associated with what we coded as an informal/colloquial voice. Voice codes were applicable during concurrent protocols. When a voice code coincided with an affect code for both participants, 13 of 14 negative affect codes appeared with formal/academic writing, and 5 of 5 positive affect codes appeared with informal/colloquial writing. On the whole, then, Gail's and Clara's personal writing was a far more satisfying experience for them than was their academic writing.

Academic writing

Q: Is being wrong something that you worry about?

Gail: Sometimes when I like, in formal papers, I sometimes I do. Because I mean, I like to write, and just whatever I say goes. I mean, just being able to write whatever. And when I make a more formal paper, sometimes I think about it. I think about it before I actually write it.

As she noted in her discussion of her personal writing during her retrospective protocol, Gail did not like being evaluated on her writing. She preferred the way in which writing in relation to herself could not be evaluated on content because the content of her life could not be assessed. Writing an academic paper on a topic within a limited range, however, opened up the possibility that she could be wrong and downgraded on her inaccuracies.

Gail did not dismiss academic writing simply because she enjoyed it less. In the spring, in response to an assignment to write a research paper on the

Renaissance as preparation for reading *Hamlet*, Gail chose the topic of Anne Boleyn. She described her research paper by saying,

Gail: It was real educational and I learned a lot. But it wasn't like an enjoyable type of writing.

Q: Why not?

Gail: Because, I don't know, it wasn't real personalised ... I liked mine because of my topic. Just that type of writing. I mean I got into my topic. I shouldn't say I didn't enjoy it, because Ann Boleyn to me was interesting. I kind of made it personalised. So to me that was interesting.

Q: How did you do that?

Gail: Well, kind of during the time that I was, this is going to sound mad, but during the time that I was writing in my own life, I could kind of relate to what happened to her ... I had just had like a major breakup with a guy that I had been dating for like a year and a half. She was having like, I mean, it wasn't exactly, because I mean, the situations are totally different.

Q: You didn't get your head cut off.

Gail: Right. But I can kind of, her emotions, and I mean I could feel that I could relate somewhat to it, and so I kind of pulled myself into it ... It seems to me that when I do a research paper, I have to kind of, in some way, kind of try to make it relate to me to where it is interesting to me.

Gail made these remarks in retrospect, when she could reflect back on the ways in which she had entered her topic by making a personal connection between her experiences at the time and Ann Boleyn's. Her actual production of the text, at least that portion captured during her concurrent protocol, revealed the frustration she experienced during the process of writing. She began the session by planning her approach to the task:

I am just right now going over my notes and stuff because I have got to put a rough draft together. I am just going to read through them and organise my thoughts and try to come up with a thesis or some kind of main idea or position that I am going to take on this paper. So I guess I am just going to read my notes out loud.

Throughout this review of her notes, Gail interspersed comments about the information. We regarded these remarks as instances of an informal voice that she employed as a way to make the information accessible to her, something she did 16 times during her concurrent protocol. We italicise these remarks in the following excerpt:

Anne was pregnant again when the King took a terrible fall from his horse. *That part was not in the movie, I don't know where I got that information.* He was unconscious

for two hours, and the shock brought on a premature labour, and she miscarried a male child, so he would have no male heir since she miscarried. *Miscarriages were pretty common back then, I guess.* The loss of this possible child sealed her fate. It was basically said that she was gone and that he was going to find some way to kill her. *He is a terrible guy.* *Ok, anyway* Henry determined to rid himself of her. He brought together a commission to investigate her conduct and find some fault with her even if it was not true. She had indeed indulged, *like flirting with everyone, but she was young and attractive, and he was so much older.* Anyway there was no sound evidence, and she was guilty of the charges of adultery with Henry [inaudible] and incest relationship with her own brother. *Why would they bring her brother against her like that? That is ridiculous.*

After reviewing her notes in this fashion, Gail began to draft her paper. Her first task was to develop a thesis to guide her research report. Again, she employed an informal voice to think through a possible focus:

I need to come up with a thesis for this paper. I thought about kind of talking about how the King was a jerk and just wanted a son and didn't get it. Then I kind of wanted to talk about Anne thought she was a witch or something. I think she was power hungry, but what could she do? She could either defy the King, then her feelings would be like torn because the King would make her life miserable if she wouldn't give in to him. I am trying to come up with a thesis. I might say like Anne was - I don't know. I can't figure this out - ambitious and had such a power over Henry VIII that he [inaudible] great suspicions of spells and sorcery which inevitably ended by changing the course of history. That would be good because that would leave [inaudible]. He was so infatuated with her, and then she could not produce a son so that [inaudible] her suspicions and changed the course of history, and she was beheaded.

We interpret Gail's process here as one in which she talked through possible thesis statements in her own vernacular as a way to grasp the central idea that she then articulated in an academic voice. Gail appeared to be thinking through her thesis statement through familiar language, a process she needed to go through in order to take on the more formal, less accessible tone of academic language for her paper.

With this thesis established, Gail began the process of converting her notes to a formal academic report on Anne Boleyn. Even with her planning, she had a difficult time finding an academic voice through which to report the information she had researched, an effort that was further compromised by interruptions from the telephone:

Oh gosh. We will just start this out and - She was the second and most famous wife of King Henry VIII. She was the second and most famous wife of King Henry VIII. But her days in the palace were not long. In fact, her days as Queen were numbered. [phone rings] Hang on. [pause] [That was a] college in [an adjacent state]. Her days as Queen were not powerful, her days as Queen were - [phone rings] Oh my gosh, hang on. [pause] Another hangup call. Her days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen. Anne's days as Queen - gosh, I can't get over this stump here. Anne's days as Queen were fought hard, no, were fought hard to obtain. There were days, Anne's days as Queen were fought hard to obtain. She is just known as Anne of a Thousand Days. Okay, that is my first part.

As her protocol suggests, Gail struggled with this report - not because the content was inaccessible, but because of the difficulties she had in phrasing the information in a formal or academic voice. Furthermore, she felt that her reader for this piece, we assume, would bring a more critical and evaluative eye to her reading than would readers of her personal writing. We coded segments such as this one as representing an academic voice of the sort that, as we reported at the outset of the article, led her to such statements as, 'I always care, and I don't care.' In retrospect she realised that she had found ways to enter the topic through personal connections. She experienced the process of finding the appropriate voice for formal academic writing, however, as a struggle to 'get over this stump,' one that contributed to her feeling that the process of writing was often not enjoyable, even if it was ultimately educational and of relevance to her current life experiences.

Hybrid Writing

For both participants in the study, hybrid writing came in response to the Bon Voyage project. Gail did not provide a concurrent protocol while working on this paper. She did, however, discuss it during her retrospective protocol:

Gail: We researched it. And so I mean there were facts that anyone could find. I mean, you could go and look at them, find them and everything. But then the way you arranged it, that is what made it, everyone's unique, and the way you added personal touches to certain things. Everybody's sense of humour was in there. And their point of view ... I like that a lot. Because that way it made it a little more informal, a little more relaxed. I like that. It didn't make it so structured and so common. I like that.

Q: Let me ask you, is it the fact that it looks like everybody else's when it is finished that bothers you, or the

fact that it is more likely to be graded in a particular way?

Gail: It is probably being graded in a more particular way. Because sometimes when I make a formal paper, I guess I am just like, is that really what they are asking for, is that really what they want, or should I have worded it that way? I mean, in creative writing, I think it is really hard for a teacher to grade that type of writing, to me that makes it a lot easier for me. Because I can't go wrong when I do that. I could, on punctuation, stuff like that. But the content of it, I think that makes it more relaxed so I can kind of, I don't know, write a little more relaxed anyway.

Gail's account of her affective experiences with the Bon Voyage paper suggests that it enabled her to express the information about her research topic in a way that more closely approximated her experiences with personal or creative writing. Her description of what we coded as an informal/colloquial voice as 'easier' and 'more relaxed' suggests that she did not experience the sort of anxiety that led her to be 'stumped' when reporting research in an academic voice. The absence of concurrent protocols during her hybrid writing prevented us from analysing her composing process more immediately and carefully. In retrospect, however, she described her experience as pleasurable compared to her frustrations in writing about Anne Boleyn, which we coded as affect-positive in the categories of taking enjoyment and developing an investment in writing.

Summary

Gail's protocols reveal substantially different kinds of experiences with personal, academic, and hybrid writing during her senior year in British Literature. We would regard Gail as an example of what Eckert (1989) refers to as a school's 'jocks': those students with a strong affiliation with the institution of school. While her athletic prowess allowed her to participate in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity (soccer), our characterisation of her as a 'jock' comes more from her apparent acceptance of school work as worthy activity. She even found value in a writing assignment with which she struggled - her research paper on Anne Boleyn - by finding a way to connect to it personally through an affiliation with her topic's experiences. In other words, Gail's participation allowed us to study a student who appeared willing to accept any school work as potentially valuable, which we would attribute to her sense of alliance with school and possibly to the ways in which her mother oriented her to literacy in positive ways throughout her life.

With this favourable outlook toward school, Gail found herself writing toward different expectations in her British Literature class. During writing workshops she could pursue topics and forms of her choice, allowing her to write without fear of correction or contradiction; she was rewarded for the sincere production of writing rather than writing that had a particular form and register. She appeared to be 'in tune' with the expectations for this segment of the class, producing writing with which she was happy and that was well-received by Cindy. Issues of voice became more problematic while writing during the more formal study of British Literature, when Cindy became a different reader, one who adopted the values of college professors and others who expect students to conform to accepted standards for propriety. Under these circumstances, Gail found herself stumped with phrasing her knowledge in an appropriate form and voice, producing the disassociation in affect revealed in her statement that 'I always care, and I don't care' about the research paper, even if she eventually produced a report in the form expected for this assignment.

Gail employed an informal voice in both research assignments. As she wrote the Anne Boleyn report, she talked to herself in colloquial language as a way to digest the information and work through efforts at formal expression. She also reported finding enjoyment in her Bon Voyage paper because of the latitude she was given in how to present it: Writing teenager-to-teenager, she got all of the information across without stumbling over how to phrase it. This change in readership appeared to provide Gail with the sort of *third space* in which she could approach ideas more playfully and express them unencumbered by an authority figure's expectations for formal phrasing. Although we have no concurrent protocols to analyse for her experiences during personal and hybrid writing, her remarks about the ease and pleasure she found in this writing, and in the humour and other unique aspects of student writing in the Bon Voyage letters, suggest that these efforts, expressed in an informal or colloquial voice, were more satisfying experiences for her.

Clara

In addition to British Literature, Clara took courses in Psychology, Algebra, and Recordkeeping (where she learned to take shorthand and take notes), and served as an office aide. Of these classes, British Literature and Psychology required writing; of the Recordkeeping class, Clara said, 'We wrote all the time in there, but we

never wrote about – we just wrote words' that were dictated to her.

At the time of the research, Clara had recently experienced a troubled period of her life. When describing the book she wrote for her Psychology class, she said that it included a number of narratives that described 'a lot of bad experiences and things I have done'; Clara did not discuss or provide an account of these experiences for the research. Cindy recalled that Clara 'was pretty emotionally withdrawn from me and her peers at the start of the year, so group work was a challenge. Engaging with school was tough for her, too'. Clara confided in Cindy about the source of her personal difficulties, of such a confidential nature that we choose not to report them here, which helped her to reach a comfort level in class such that she both succeeded academically and had the confidence and level of engagement to volunteer for the research.

Still, we found that during her retrospective protocol and other interactions throughout the research, Clara often appeared reticent. We inferred that her undemonstrative responses might be a show of reserve in the company of a relatively unfamiliar adult (this study's first author, who elicited the protocol). Another explanation for her restrained comport is that aspects of the research might have been invasive at this precarious point in her life. (We should note that Clara did volunteer for the study and that we were not aware of her troubles until late in the study, and then only obliquely.) She also might have been, at least in contrast with the forthcoming Gail, less introspective about her writing in relation to the research. Probes for elaboration during her retrospective protocol often produced minimal responses, as illustrated in the following exchange:

Q: You have [written a piece called] 'What You Mean to Me', and is this about a friend?

Clara: Yeah.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about this?

Clara: Uh, I just went through and wrote about [how] I met a girl I have known since 5th grade, and I just wrote about all the memories that I could remember.

Q: Yes.

Clara: I just wrote about those.

Q: And were there any particular qualities that you were supposed to include in this?

Clara: No.

Q: It didn't matter?

Clara: I mean, she told us to write to someone so – I didn't even turn that in. I just wrote.

Clara found that the formal writing she did 'was harder

[than personal writing]. You had to do it that certain way'. Cindy was the only teacher who had taught the claim-data-warrant argumentative structure, so it was a unique task for Clara. In previous English classes, 'We never did prewriting or anything like that. We didn't write that much. We more just read and answered questions. Read books and stuff'. She said that she couldn't tell if her writing had improved from the previous year 'because we really didn't do that much last year'.

On the whole, Clara did not regard herself as an accomplished or enthusiastic writer. She only wrote when required to for class, and said, 'I can't write. I guess I could if I wanted to. I can't think of things to write about, a story, about something else, [I can't] make up stuff. I can't.' Her only writing outside class consisted of occasional letters to people, in which she would 'ask how they are'. In contrast to the introspective Gail, who had learned to use writing for self-exploration at an early age, Clara preferred to write 'more [about] them and not just all [about] me'. Clara appeared to have little confidence in her writing, in spite of seeming in all regards a bright and capable young woman. We infer a relation among her recent troubles, her overall reticence, and her lack of confidence, though this belief has largely impressionistic support; and as we shall discuss, we further infer that her reserve was a situational rather than pervasive aspect of her personality.

Personal writing

One result that stood out from our analysis of Clara's writing was the relative infrequency of affect codes. For Clara we coded for positive or negative affect 18 times, while for Gail we recorded 52 such codes. She did not appear to regard personal writing with the same degree of enthusiasm as Gail, or with the same potential for transformation or satisfaction that Gail found in her creative writing.

Indeed, Clara appeared for the most part to eschew creative writing in favor of more direct accounts of her experiences. During writing workshop she primarily wrote personal narratives, saying, 'I just write usually about like past experiences or about people. I don't ever write about like short stories about something else'. During her retrospective protocol she described one piece in her portfolio as follows:

Clara: It was a Mexico trip that I took when I was 14, and I just wrote about what all we did and stuff. That is about all. It was just about Mexico and me going to Mexico.

Q: Is it in the form of a story?

Clara: It just, yeah, well it just tells like basically what, you know, I did and what it meant to me and stuff like that.

She did, however, experiment with other genres. She wrote a poem entitled 'Who Am I?' for instance, that she described as 'just writing out of the top of my head and trying to make a poem because I am not very good. I was just seeing if I could do it'. Because Cindy took a portfolio approach to the workshops - that is, she encouraged students to attempt writing that they could discard if it didn't pan out and develop pieces that they found promising - Clara was able to use workshop time to explore forms even when she had little confidence in her ability to produce them. She said, 'We turn the pieces that we thought are really good into a book, an anthology thing, but I just wrote [the 'Who Am I?' poem] because we were supposed to free-write.'

For the most part Clara produced personal writing because the writing workshops tended to encourage such writing, even while allowing other avenues of expression. Her work on her personal narratives, however, appeared to be perfunctory rather than highly engaged or expressive. When asked about the uniqueness of each piece, she said,

Clara: They are basically all the same, because I was told, my experiences, they are all basically the same except for my poem. My poem, it was kind of different because it is in poem form. It asks questions. I don't know. I think it is different than the story here.

Q: Yeah. In just the way it looks?

Clara: Yeah.

Q: Does it have a different purpose?

Clara: Well, I don't know.

Clara's responses here appear to be emotionally flat, suggesting that she wrote these pieces largely because the academic situation called for them. Her retrospective protocol proceeded along these lines: dispassionate descriptions of writing she had done during class because writing was required of her.

We found, however, one reference to creative writing among Clara's four concurrent protocols that belied our general impression of her personal writing as lacking commitment and passion. It came not during writing workshop but in the British Literature portion of the curriculum in relation to the class's reading of *Hamlet*:

I am not really writing anything right now. I am at home, getting ready to go to bed, but yesterday in English, we were reading *Hamlet*, and thoughts for a story that I could [inaudible] write came in and I just

started writing. I didn't have my recorder with me then, and I just thought I would like, put it down on the recorder real fast for you. I had an idea about two sisters, Joy and Grace. Gail would be probably the centre. What she saw would be the point of the story from her point of view, about her older sister, Joy, who was a year older than her, and her father. Their father had just gotten over heart surgery. He would be weak, in a weakened condition. As the story goes along, I hadn't gotten very far. I am just trying to get all my ideas out. The mother and their father are having problems. Joy comes to find out lots of things. It is a mystery-suspense, because it turns out the mother is planning to kill them. And when I started writing, I started two months in the future, and it was as if Joy would be talking as she said, and she mentioned something about Grace being in the hospital, and she hoped she was okay, and then would stop, then I'd put two months later, earlier in the story. It would sort of foreshadow what I was going to put down. I wanted to have this mother, psychopathic, I guess, trying to murder her husband for his money, and the oldest daughter, Grace found out. She tried to kill her. It also had something to do with Grace's boyfriend. I haven't figured out how to put him into it yet. Joy turns out to try and figure out this whole thing, but see, I haven't gotten into that. I am just trying to work out all these little, I want it really, one of these kind of, when you watch a movie and like you're sitting there in a two hour movie, and it has all these plots, and just different turns, and wham, bang, there is something else new. I wanted something like that, that was just really suspenseful, you didn't know what was going to happen next. As I was writing, I was just trying to think of things that I could put down that later when I was writing, I could work from it. At one point, Joy was pulling out of her driveway, and she notices a silver Porsche across the street. I decided the silver Porsche was going to be her mother's lover who was helping her kill her husband. I just wanted something really, just really dramatic, I guess. I don't even know why I thought of it during *Hamlet*. I guess that is all for this tape.

She did not save a copy of this piece in her portfolio. We were struck, however, by the way in which Clara found this story outline important enough not only to conceive during the formal study of *Hamlet*, when creative writing was not required, but to take time before retiring for the night to enter this account among her protocols for the research. We would infer that both the urge to write this story and the extra dedication of time and effort to the research suggest that this writing was of some importance to Clara. Such an imperative, we found, was notably absent from her efforts at academic writing, which we review next.

Academic writing

For Cindy's class Clara produced academic writing during the regular British Literature curriculum, including a research paper on Henry VIII, arguments including the claim-data-warrant structure based on instruction described by Kahn et al. (1984) for literary analysis, and writing for tests. This writing was not available through her concurrent protocols. Rather, she worked on a variety of papers for her Psychology class. Like Gail, she found her formal writing to be difficult to express in appropriate academic language. She said, for instance, that formal writing 'was harder. You had to do it that certain way.'

For example, the following excerpt reveals Clara working on what she called an 'essay' for Psychology. As we did with Gail's protocol excerpts, we italicise the informal/colloquial phrasings that accompanied her efforts to produce a formal report.

[Within ten years] one quarter of our country's population will be over the age of 65. Write an essay describing social, economic, and health implications of this statement. *Oh, Jeez, that is deep! That is kind of heavy on my brain! [Within ten years!]! An essay! Wait a minute, you must be joking! I ain't going to write no essay. I need something to eat. [pause] OK, let's get back to this stupid essay ...* Write an essay describing social, economic, and health implications of this statement. Three-fourths of the rest of us will be under 65. *I don't want to do this. Social, economic, and health implications ... The social, economic and health implications of our, of our country's - oh, I hate this - social [inaudible] of the population. And I have got to study this. It is not making any sense. I hate this. I hate this.*

Her remarks of disaffection perhaps need little commentary; our coding in the areas of *antipathy toward writing* and *stress/anxiety* were easy areas of agreement in our decision-making. At this point in the protocol, Clara's informal comments are largely judgments about the assignment rather than colloquial efforts to arrive at formal phrasing.

Similarly, Clara produced a pair of protocols while writing synopses of films she had seen in her Psychology class. She had difficulty translating her notes to an appropriate formal academic voice:

I am at home and I am doing my Psychology homework right now. We watched a movie today about ageing. And I took notes on it, and now I have to take the notes and put it into a summary. And I hate this, I really hate this. It is hard ... Why is ageing for some people different than for others? Let's see, write that down. Who cares? ... I don't want to do this ... I don't want to do it. I don't want to do it. Okay,

synopsis. Let's start by, I don't want to do this. I don't know how to get this little information into a long, page thing. A Rouge Test¹ on children. Where is it, say, I don't know, let's just write, maturation of the brain, from maturation of the brain is accompanied by the emergence of cognitive confidences. What does this mean though? The brain maturing is also accompanied by the emergence of cognitive confidences. Cognitive confidences, what does that mean? Let's see, a look of boredom, she is going to kill me for this, I am not going to get a grade, and if I don't get a grade, she is like, 'Oh, but what is wrong? We must talk about it.' The problem with psychology teachers is they want to analyse everything. They just can't accept it. A look of boredom can mean that they have already done it or have already experienced it. Children who have a fixation on sounds and faces just after birth. I wish I could remember more about this movie. Let's say the Rouge Test, and I guess I am done with that.

Clara found the formal tone of her sources to be 'boring,' leading her to 'hate' and not care about either the writing or the content that the writing was designed to help her learn. The affect codes that accompanied this writing, like those in the previous illustration, were what we would consider negative, such as *antipathy toward writing* and *anxiety/stress*.

Later in this protocol, Clara interspersed comments in her own colloquial voice. These comments largely served as comments on the information; unlike Gail, she did not use informal speech as a way to explore ideas on their way to more formal articulation. In the following excerpt from this Psychology synopsis, instances of her informal/colloquial voice are in italics:

A rat had been kept in the small cage for many years with no mental activity, stimulation at all, had quite a simple brain. But when they put him into what could be compared to a Disneyland for rats, his synapses in his brain rose 2,000 per neuron in that rat's brain. *Per neuron. That's amazing.* In rats that had no mental activity most of their lives, it was found that when put into a 'Disneyland for rats,' the synapses in their brains multiplied by 2,000 per neuron. *I hope that is really different, but it means the same thing.* They seemed more alert. The rats become more alert, played and socialised, more. *This is kind of boring. We talked about some stupid monkey.* The macaque monkeys lived longer than they ever thought possible. It was about 30 years long. A 30-year-old macaque monkey is equal to a 90-year-old person. *That's pretty old.*

Clara also provided a concurrent protocol while working on a research paper on the artist Joseph Albers. As she did with her Psychology synopses, she strained to work fluently within the authoritative discourse of her sources and the expectations for her own writing.

While reviewing her notes early in the protocol, she said that Albers

became one of the most influential propagators – he became one of the most influential propagators of Bauhaus ideas. He became influential of ideas or about art of design. (Sighs) *This is boring ...* His exploitation of the fact that grammatically approximate colours could produce the illusion of third colour also making a precursor of the off artists. Art visual perception – *I think I'll skip that. I'll go to Albers's recollection of [inaudible] to speak and interaction with colours rather than to use the [inaudible].* There is usually in his painting a sense of – *come on, speak in English, please. Let's put this in English.*

Here, Clara both commented on the topic and used exploratory, informal speech as a way of managing the content during her process of seeking a formal way to express it. After reviewing her notes, Clara began writing her essay. She again struggled with phrasing the information in a suitably academic voice and interspersed remarks in her own informal voice (italicised) with the formal academic voice she employed for the actual writing:

It was not surprising that the Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius, head of the graduate school in the architecture college at Harvard University. *I am babbling. I just keep going on and on and on* (begins singing). Bauhaus has been described as a kind of University of peer construction in the part of – Bauhaus was founded in some town in 1818 by Walter. When Alders had completed his studies, he remained at Bauhaus teaching concept. *OK, we got that in the last article. This is the one where the page screwed up. In the very last article, in the very last paragraph, it talks about his other life.* On May 9, 1925 he married Annie Fleischmann *like the butter, Annie Fleischmann, Fleischmann with two N's.* She taught weaving – *sounds like fun.* She taught weaving. *Oh, I will get this done.* She taught weaving at Black Mountain College in 1933. She taught weaving after travelling to Black Mountain College with her husband. Weaving. *I need a different way to put this.* She travelled with her husband to Black Mountain College in 1933, was an assistant professor of art where she taught weaving. *OK.* In 1933, she travelled with her husband to Black Mountain College, College, in order – *no, wait a minute,* and taught weaving. She is known for her elegant tapestries and fabric design.

Throughout these protocols, Clara appeared disaffected with the work expected of her. It is possible that she simply took little interest in the topics, which were circumscribed by the curriculum while allowing for some choice. We would argue as well that the protocols suggest that the language she was expected to produce – the sort of formal speech that she railed against in her

comments – served to distance her from the information in ways that made learning a chore for her.

Hybrid writing

Clara did not produce a concurrent protocol while working on her Bon Voyage project. She did, however, include the final draft of the paper in her portfolio, for which by coincidence she selected Gail as the recipient. What we find interesting about her letter is the degree of enthusiasm and vividness in her final product – interesting, we say, because of what we found to be her reserved, seemingly ‘withdrawn’ relationships with others in the context of school and the research and her general lack of enthusiasm or confidence with respect to her writing. Following is the beginning of the Bon Voyage project letter that Clara wrote to Gail:

Dear Gail,

Hi! How are you? It has been so long since we’ve written or talked. I’m doing great! I guess you have already received the invitation to the reunion. Doesn’t it sound wonderful? I can’t believe it! I’ve already started packing. Who do you think the donor is? My guess would be Anthony. You remember when he used to rap in class all the time? I bet he’s made millions in the music business. Don’t you think? Who else could it be?

After high school, when I moved to Colorado, I spent a lot of time at my husband Craig’s ranch. I developed a liking for horses and for a while that’s all I wanted to do with my spare time. I decided when we moved to New Mexico, that we would have our own ranch. So with my husband’s inheritance, we bought a ranch, some horses and equipment. I ride all the time. It is a new hobby for me. Sometimes I get too busy to ride and take care of the horses like I should. Every four to six weeks, they have to change their horseshoes. Every eight to ten weeks, they have to be treated for worms. There are so many routine chores involved in caring for these animals. The horses are my second family. We own Highland Horses. They are large and come from the Highlands of Scotland. They are great family horses. I can’t wait to teach my son Taylor how to ride.

The *Queen Elizabeth II* sounds incredible! A luxury passenger liner, how fabulous! It was first launched in September of 1967. It was made to carry 2,025 passengers. Can you imagine all those people on a single ship? The ship is 963 feet long. Its top speed is 32.46 miles per hour. This ship has 13 decks. I bet there is something different to do on each one of them. It contains the largest room afloat, the Double Room. It has swimming pools, a workout room and a large sun deck. I can’t wait to get my tan. Oh! And the shopping. There is an actual mall on the ship. Can you believe it?!

I can’t wait to get to New York City. I have been there before, but there were so many sights I didn’t get to see. The United Nations Building was one of the things I

missed. I have heard it was very interesting. It overlooks the East River. I especially want to go to a Broadway play. I have heard they are the best. There is a boat tour during the day. It’s the Circle Line Boats in Manhattan. SHOPPING! They have so many different stores. The subways will be very interesting. It is kind of like stepping into the twilight zone. Where are you staying while you are there? Craig and I are staying at the Par Fifty One. It has Italian marble baths, a health club and a limo service. Imagine this, there is a phone in the bathroom. Isn’t that wild? We are going to a fabulous restaurant, called the Box Three. It has a French-English menu. They have a wine cellar. They are well known for their lobster. It is my favourite. The restaurant is rated four-star!

I have been wanting to go to Hawaii forever. It sounds like such a beautiful place. The volcanoes will be amazing. I can’t wait to see the craters of Diamond Head and Punchbowl. I am really anxious to see the beaches. Especially Waikiki Beach, it is lined with hotels and condos – over a hundred of them. It is quite a tourist attraction with over five million tourists visiting annually. What a popular place and we will be able to say we’ve been there. Have you heard about the mansion there? It is called the Washington Palace. It was built in 1846. If I’m not mistaken, I think it is the residence of Hawaii’s governor. Not only is there a mansion, but there is an actual palace. It is the only royal palace in the United States. It is called Iolani Palace. I am sure Craig can’t wait to see the Aloha Stadium where the football Pro Bowl game is held each January. A great part of our history is there at Pearl Harbor. I hear it is quite enormous. I guess we will see soon enough.

Clara’s letter included a lot of information. She covered items of interest to her: shopping, luxurious accommodations, and so on. We also see the projection of a social future in her report, one in which she is happily married, is provided an inheritance, and has access to a certain degree of luxury and leisure. Each aspect of this future also includes relevant details, down to the phone in her hotel bathroom.

What stands out – something that we attribute to the assignment and the shift in readership – is the enthusiastic and vivid voice through which she relates her letter. Her voice is accessible and conversational, absent the stilted and technical language of the formal research reports and Psychology class synopses we found in her concurrent protocols. We have no correlative data on Clara’s writing during her production of her Bon Voyage letter to Gail. We infer, however, that the fluency of her writing suggests that she found this writing to be a more affectively rewarding experience than reports produced in a formal voice.

Summary

We found Clara's experiences with her senior year writing to be enigmatic. Coming off a difficult period in her life, she appeared in many ways to be detached from school and from the role of writing in both her education and personal life. She laboured through her academic writing, imploring her sources to 'speak in English' for greater ease of understanding and ultimately expression in her own synopses and reports. Unlike Gail, Clara had little volition for creative or personal writing, choosing to keep her narratives at the literal level with no inclination for extensive reflection or introspection, at least not in the context of class or the research. Yet in late winter she was overtaken by an idea that she wanted to convert into a fictive narrative, one of such interest and insistency that she was preoccupied with it later that day and made the effort to include in the protocols she was recording for the research.

Clara's relative ebullience in her *Bon Voyage* paper suggests something about the relational nature of both schooling and research. McCarthy (1998) has argued that people do not have static personalities, but rather exhibit different subjectivities in relation to different people, contexts, and other situational factors. Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) further caution against essentialising any cultural group in educational research. We would be tempted to describe Clara as a middle-class teen characterised as shy, reserved, or exhibiting some other overarching personality trait. Yet her various protocols and papers show her, in some settings, being highly expressive: of her distaste for academic writing, of her interest in living the life of luxury, and ultimately of her urgency in writing a short story about a set of relationships. This last expression came toward the end of the research when she had perhaps achieved a greater sense of comfort with the mechanics of protocol analysis, the researcher on the other end of the tape recorder, or something else with respect to her life, her education, or the study. Rather, then, than viewing Clara as being governed by a particular personality or trait, we see her exhibiting, at different times and under different circumstances, different degrees of restraint and expressiveness. These different performances appeared to be tied to the social context of her expression, in particular the recipients of her utterance: Carla Rogers with her expectations for formal phrasing, Gail as the reader of her *Bon Voyage* report, Cindy as she took different stances as a teacher-reader, and the first author as the addressee of her protocols.

Discussion

Researchers interested in differential experiences of students from different backgrounds have argued that school tasks privilege middle-class students whose home social languages map better onto school discourse than do those of students from linguistic or cultural minority groups. Ketter and Poole (2001), for instance, argue that

school discourse is closely aligned with the primary discourse of middle-class children; consequently, wealthier children are at an advantage because not only their language but also their ways of 'thinking, valuing, and behaving' (Gee, [1996], p. 142) are more compatible with the discourse of schools ... When working class kids are required to communicate predominantly in school discourse, they may feel coerced to adopt values and practices that conflict with their own. (pp. 349-350)

We regard both Gail and Clara as members of the middle class, and yet we find that Ketter and Poole's characterisation would fit them fairly well. Both struggled to find a voice within the expectations of academic discourse, with Clara requesting that her sources be written 'in English' instead of the stilted and alien prose of academia.

While we would not underestimate the relative difficulties experienced by students even further removed from mainstream discourse genres than Gail and Clara, we argue that even middle-class students lack the fluency with authoritative discourse assumed in many accounts of learners' experiences in school. Gail's persistence with satisfying the expectations for academic writing through efforts to make personal connections suggests one way that students more compatible with the values and processes of school can work toward this fluency when students less invested in the institution of school might find less motivation for making such an effort (see, e.g., the working class students described by Eckert, 1989).

Our findings from our study of Gail's and Clara's experiences with personal, academic, and hybrid writing might simply confirm what many teachers of writing have known for some time: that students enjoy schoolwork more when they are not required to conform to academic conventions. Blau's (2003) claims about students' pompous prose are part of a trend dating at least to the 1960s – the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College in 1966 is regarded by many as a watershed event – that has shifted teachers' emphasis from form to process, from academic

convention to experiences while learning, that has gone by many names: the process movement, the growth curriculum, and others. Those arguing from this perspective have bemoaned the ways in which students' personal lives and idiosyncratic forms of expression are either disregarded or homogenised in school. Rather, they are expected to mimic conventions that may serve their own purposes as writers poorly. Our study of Gail and Clara adds evidence to support the belief that, if the quality of immediate experience is valuable (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and thus if the quality of the experience of writing is important, schools' exclusive emphasis on academic conventions may not adequately contribute to students' writing development.

We see some additional implications following from our study. First, we see Cindy's scaffolding of instruction in writing research reports as valuable in helping students to learn a process for reporting information without being further encumbered by mastering conventions at the same time. The Bon Voyage project was designed to reduce students' cognitive demands by enabling them to focus on the information-gathering methods that Cindy outlined in the students' project journals, allowing their reportage of that information to come through student-to-student, vernacular forms of language. The evidence provided from Gail through her retrospective comments, and Clara through the vivid language of her report-cum-letter, suggests that they were able to learn this process and effectively report their findings in a way they found accessible and enjoyable.

We cannot state conclusively the degree to which the students were able to reapply the information-gathering procedures to their more formal research report later in the year. What we did find was that even with this preparation, they struggled to phrase information in appropriate academic form – in both the formal research and film summaries – often expressing hatred for the task and exhibiting difficulty in producing fluent academic prose. They spontaneously provided either colloquial commentary or informal efforts at grasping information before translating it into formal writing. We see a possibility that teachers could make this process more explicit, perhaps by modelling through think-alouds how they might take information, work with it through informal speech, and ultimately translate it into an appropriate form.

We also are forced to reconsider the role of academic conventions in school writing. Clara's Bon Voyage report comes across as knowledgeable and informative.

Her attention to shopping and other teenage pursuits might not be the sort of information sought by teachers, but her Bon Voyage letter provided one of the few occasions that we found where her writing appeared to be interesting and enjoyable to her. Students now have access to multiple ways of reporting information: through documentary films and other video formats, through web pages, and through other media. Conventional research reports, while undoubtedly a stalwart of the English curriculum, might benefit from reconsideration, with other means of presentation being admitted to the range of possibilities to which students have access.

A final consideration concerns Cindy's relatively simple shift in audience from herself to a fellow student (with Cindy ultimately serving as a second reader, albeit one with the authority to issue a grade). Given the relational nature of communication as outlined by Nystrand (1986), such changes in readership appear to have remarkable effects on how students construct and carry out an academic task. Teachers, then, might reconsider the roles of the contexts in which they ask students to write. If, as Nystrand argues, these contexts set the stage for whatever reciprocity emerges between writer and reader(s), teachers could create new settings for writing that call for student writers to study and anticipate what others expect in their writing. Such a move would undoubtedly serve them well as they write for their own purposes outside school in settings in which academic writing may not be the best vehicle for correspondence, and in which having a repertoire of conventions may serve them best.

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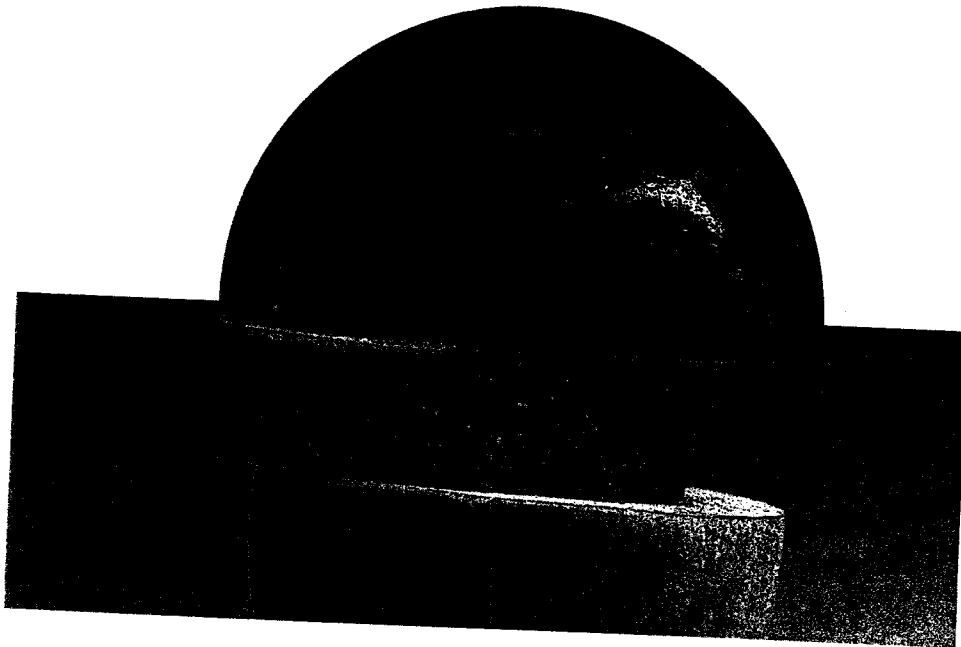
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Note

- 1 In a typical Rouge Test experiment, researchers asked a group of mothers and their babies, aged 9 to 24 months, to play in front of a mirror. First, the researchers observed how each baby acted in front of a mirror. Next, each mother pretended to wipe dirt off her baby's face, but was actually putting a small spot of rouge on the tip of the baby's nose. The babies were then placed in front of the mirror again to see if they would notice the red spot on their noses, recognise that something was different about their faces and try to wipe the red spot off, or have some other reaction (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn 1979).

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Appendix

The Bon Voyage Assignment Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration

The time is ten years from the present. You, as a past member of this English class, have been invited to a ten-year reunion. It will take place on the luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth II*. The ship will leave New York Harbor ten years from now. Your cruise will last fourteen days; your direction will be south. An anonymous donation from one of the members of the class will pay all expenses, including your round-trip airfare for two. Only your teacher knows who paid for all of this.

Since you are no longer living here, you want to re-establish contact with one of your friends from this class. You, therefore, will write a letter to this person, relating specific details about many aspects of your life and specific knowledge of the following items (you have, in joyous anticipation, conducted extensive research before making this fantastic odyssey). These research items include:

- The *Queen Elizabeth II* and her ports of call
- New York City
- The college, vocational school, military branch, or career path you chose following high school
- • The city to which you moved (anywhere in the world)
- The belief system you now endorse and/or the faith community of which you are now a member
- Your present career (use jargon of the job)
- Your unique – or at least unusual – hobby
- Your letter will also include personal items:
- Your family situation, including information about your life partner and children, if any. If you remain unattached, please mention information about past or present significant others.
- Any updates about members of the class
- Speculations concerning the anonymous donor
- References to mutual friends you have seen in the past ten years
- Any other personal items you choose to include

Before submitting this letter to your teacher, make another copy and put it in an appropriately addressed business envelope and give it to the addressee to read.

Good luck and Bon Voyage!