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Learning from feedback: How students read, interpret and use teacher written feedback in the composition classroom

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Learning from feedback: How students read, interpret and use teacher written feedback in the composition classroom

Abstract
Much research on teacher written feedback has focused on the teacher’s role in giving the written commentary. What these studies fail to provide is a description of if and how students are reading, interpreting and using this feedback in their revisions. Some research has explored how students feel about the feedback they receive, but few studies have investigated the interplay between teacher and student in the actual process of feedback and revision. Those studies that have looked at feedback and revision in the classroom context are few in both first and second language writing research. Further, these few studies fall short of making explicit connections between student revision and student learning. This dissertation argues that the key to describing how and why students revise is determining the level of understanding with which students read and interpret teacher comments. This level of understanding is then also essential when considering what students have learned versus what they have just copied from the teacher.

I conducted a qualitative case study of four first-year writing students and two writing instructors at a two-year college with a diverse population of students. Two of my participants were non-traditional students, one was a non-native speaker of English and one was a ‘traditional’ student. This diversity gave the study a rich look at both what about teacher feedback promotes student learning, and what may confuse students. Using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, I described the different levels of cognitive processes students experienced as they read the feedback and revised. The taxonomy helped me differentiate between students’ automated revisions and students’ metacognitive awareness of the revision strategies they employed. Also, these cases evidenced the interplay of teacher appropriation and student agency in the process of feedback interpretation and revision. These findings suggest that teachers may need to explicitly train students to read feedback, and may need to open up new avenues for feedback negotiation in the writing classroom.

Keywords
Language, Rhetoric and Composition, Education, Language and Literature, English
LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK:
HOW STUDENTS READ, INTERPRET AND USE TEACHER
WRITTEN FEEDBACK IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

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in
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ABSTRACT

LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK: HOW STUDENTS READ, INTERPRET AND USE TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

Elisabeth A. Kramer-Simpson

University of New Hampshire, September, 2012

Much research on teacher written feedback has focused on the teacher's role in giving the written commentary. What these studies fail to provide is a description of if and how students are reading, interpreting and using this feedback in their revisions. Some research has explored how students feel about the feedback they receive, but few studies have investigated the interplay between teacher and student in the actual process of feedback and revision. Those studies that have looked at feedback and revision in the classroom context are few in both first and second language writing research. Further, these few studies fall short of making explicit connections between student revision and student learning. This dissertation argues that the key to describing how and why students revise is determining the level of understanding with which students read and interpret teacher comments. This level of understanding is then also essential when considering what students have learned versus what they have just copied from the teacher.

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and one was a ‘traditional’ student. This diversity gave the study a rich look at both what about teacher feedback promotes student learning, and what may confuse students. Using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, I described the different levels of cognitive processes students experienced as they read the feedback and revised. The taxonomy helped me differentiate between students’ automated revisions and students’ metacognitive awareness of the revision strategies they employed. Also, these cases evidenced the interplay of teacher appropriation and student agency in the process of feedback interpretation and revision. These findings suggest that teachers may need to explicitly train students to read feedback, and may need to open up new avenues for feedback negotiation in the writing classroom.
CHAPTER I

TEACHER RESPONSE AND STUDENT LEARNING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The goal of giving students written feedback is primarily to support their learning and development as writers. The central problem guiding this research was how students learn from teacher written response or feedback. Providing clear feedback to student writing has always challenged me. As a first year teacher, I wrote ‘expand here’ on a student’s paper. I had hoped he would expand by adding details or additional ideas to his text. However, he decided to triple space the text. Both he and I were crushed: how could teacher/student communication go so horribly wrong? I then became excessively explicit in my feedback and made the mistake several times of ‘bloodying’ a student’s paper with my comments. I knew somewhere there had to be a balance, but I just hadn’t received much training in how to give feedback, and I was still developing the experience necessary to be able to read students, and judge what they could handle.

I discovered over the years that I am not alone, and that other teachers also worry about how to give feedback. We worry about the time it takes, the communication with students and whether or not the students even read what we write. I notice many researchers of feedback begin their articles with these personal frustrations (Goldstein, 2004; Sommers, 1982). These sticking points, however, are what push us to look further for answers through systematic research. These frustrations lead to our learning and the
better support of our students. I am not only in good company in the US, but internationally, this issue of feedback seems a pressing point of concern in the classroom and in research. I taught at a teacher training center in Korea where I saw 90 new teachers each month. I taught the writing module, and in my first several months teaching, found myself fielding more comments about feedback than anything else.

Due in part to my experiences with both first and second language writers and due to the increasingly diverse population of the contemporary composition classroom (Matsuda, 2006), I was drawn to explore how feedback is discussed in both first and second writing literature. What solidified my commitment to blending these two literature traditions was the diverse make-up of the classes I chose to observe and the students I recruited for this particular study. Three of my participants were native speakers of English, and one was a native speaker of Vietnamese. Also, the English 102 classrooms I observed contained many second language writers. Clearly, multilingual writer concerns were important to address for teachers in my study. Throughout my dissertation then, I include and blend literature from both L1 and L2 writing.

As I have read feedback approaches, pieces of each speak to me, such as Goldstein’s (2004) requiring revision to promote comment use. However, it seems we have become so focused on what we as teachers do that the students’ role has been rather neglected. We know some about student revision, but how do they come to that revision? What decision making processes influence them as they revise?

Few studies discussing written commentary, response and feedback, either in first or second language writing, have addressed this issue, due perhaps to the difficulty in tracing learning in student writing. However, with a multimodal, qualitative method, this
study was able to begin to unpack the processes of students interpreting commentary, revising using this commentary, and ultimately learning from the teacher feedback. Students proved articulate in interviews about their revising process as both a thought process and a textual act. The four voices in my study provide both teachers and researchers of writing with insight into creating conducive learning environments for students.

Feedback, as defined in this dissertation, is teacher written response to student writing, both commentary and grades. In my count of comments (See table 4 chapter 2) direct corrections were included. However, these direct corrections did not elicit a clear process of learning in the way that grades and commentary did. Students simply implemented the changes with little discussion with me and little evidence of transfer to other essays. Thus, I did not include direct corrections in my discussions in chapters III, IV and V of feedback. No codes were used by the teachers in this study, thus this was excluded from my definition of feedback. Other terms, such as commentary (Goldstein, 2005) and response (Sommers, 1982) have been used to describe the process of teachers providing guidance to student essays in written form. However, feedback is the central term that draws these studies together. Feedback as defined in this dissertation is not unidirectional. Instead, it is a dialogue, where both teacher and student contribute to the meaning of the textual commentary. In the feedback dialogic, the teacher intends a meaning that is interpreted, often differently, by the student. In turn, the teacher interprets the student’s revision, often differently than the student intended. Thus, it is important to understanding feedback that we as researchers and teachers look at both the teacher and the student’s actions in this relationship.
Uptake, or the students' use of the teacher comment and knowledge of the reason behind the comment, also plays a central role in discussions of feedback. Uptake is the process of student learning, characterized by student action and metacognitive awareness. The act of revising often leads students to uptake teacher feedback, which in turn can lead to student learning.

Historically in composition research on revision, students have been the focus of inquiry (Murray, 1972; Sommers, 1980). However, as research advanced during the 1980s and 90s, the student became obscured by focus on how the teacher was constructing commentary. Only a few, sporadic case studies of teacher commentary looked at how students were using teacher comments in revisions (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Onore, 1989; Prior, 1995; Sperling, 1994). Some error correction studies have looked at student revision (see Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005). However, error correction studies tend to focus on a more limited number of revision possibilities than studies of more content and organization-based feedback. Further, students did not focus much time or attention on these sentence level issues in our discussions of their revisions. Thus, error correction studies are excluded from this literature review.

Theoretically, composition has asserted that both cognitive processes and sociocultural factors are important in charting students' writing development and learning. However, recent focus on the sociocultural has to some degree obscured exploration of what thought processes students experience when writing and revising. Also, studies of feedback and revision have been hard pressed to find points of access into students' thought operations. In this study, I incorporate text-based stimulated recall interviews and a writing reactions protocol to mitigate this issue. Also, I use Bloom's
revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to provide vocabulary for discussing how these operations impact learning.

Exploring students’ learning processes in using feedback and revising also offers insight into questions of agency and appropriation. Understanding these power dynamics between teachers and students raises questions of how these tensions can be balanced in the contemporary classroom. Further, these discussions revisit the importance of individualizing student comments rather than rubber stamping the same comments for every student (Sommers, 1982).

This qualitative case study of four first-year writers explores how students process and use teacher feedback through tracing their retrospection on their thought processes and analyzing their textual decisions. In this dissertation, I will discuss students’ processes of interpreting and using teacher feedback. I will also demonstrate how power differentials between teacher and student impact student agency and teacher appropriation. Finally, I suggest ways that teachers can train students to better read teacher feedback, and I suggest several pedagogical reforms that may increase student understanding and learning in the process of writing and revision (for more discussion of these subsequent chapters, see the end of this chapter). Particularly in Chapter I, I describe how the historical focus on students was eclipsed by focus on teachers, how sociocultural learning theories eradicated development of cognitive research and how Bloom’s revised taxonomy, a cognitive-focused, education-based learning theory, offers a way to describe and identify the processes involved with student revision and learning.
Historical Roots of Teacher Feedback and Revision Research

Studies exploring revision initially looked at revision as a recursive learned process that focused on student processes and student actions (Murray, 1972; Sommers, 1980). Revision as a re-seeing of work, not just copy editing a draft, has dominated process movement teaching and theorizing beginning in the 1970s. Yet, because process has become such a commonplace understanding, few studies of writing process and feedback have returned to the historical roots of these ideas to see the prominent role the student plays in these discussions. Literature on writing, revision and teacher feedback has lost track of the students’ perspectives and the complexity of revision. For example, Connors and Lunsford (1993) focus only on the teacher comments, and do not describe what students do with these comments as they revise. Further, studies that do look to student revisions only look to areas where teachers made comments and students changed local text, rather than looking at the text as a whole (Beason, 1993). Revision is far more complex than a fixing of teacher-marked error. By revisiting Murray (1972, 1978) and Sommers (1980), we can see the clear role that the student and the student’s thought processes play in revision and discovery.

One important lesson from Murray’s (1972, 1978) work is that re-writing or revision is more than just copy editing (though that is a part of the revision process. In Murray’s (1972) anthologized “Teach Writing as a Process Not Product,” he defines re-writing as “a reconsideration of subject, form, and audience” (p. 4). This means that revision is a re-looking at the whole piece, the content, the organization and even the intended audience. Fitzgerald (1987) writes that Murray provided a “new view of text changes as including reflections of major and/or meaty reconceptualizations of ideas and
meanings” (p. 482). This move in composition literature has implications for feedback. First, feedback in keeping with this theoretical frame should address these varied levels, prompting students to see different possibilities for their writing beyond just the sentence or even structure level of the piece. The implication for theories of revision is that the “reconsideration” is a thought process, not just a textual action.

A second important assertion from Murray is that revision is a process of discovery and creation owned by the writer—a very student-oriented perspective on teaching writing. Murray (1972) counted revisions as “equal to a new paper” (p. 6). This new essay is similar to the idea of a new creation proposed by Anderson and Krathwhol (2001). Revision, then, involves discovery, generating and planning rather than just simple changes. Murray’s approach implied that students could be encouraged to explore different options for their work, and that they should follow their own voices, not just the voice of the teacher. Appropriation of student text (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Reid, 1994) was avoided by Murray’s focus on the student. Thus, from the cradle of the process movement in the 1970s revision was a student-focused, complex process of creation.

Sommers’ early work remains seminal for describing students’ processes of revision. Like Murray, she highlights the importance of discovery and re-creation implicit in revision. Sommers (1980) writes, “at the heart of revision is the process by which writers recognize and resolve the dissonance they sense in their writing” (p. 85). Here, she is speaking specifically of experienced writers. These writers, she argues, are familiar with a kind of revision as described by Murray, not a linear process, but a resolving of “dissonance” of the whole of the writing.
Where Sommers builds on Murray’s work is through her comparing and contrasting of student writers with more experienced writers. The student writers “do not have strategies for handling the whole essay” (Sommers, 1980, p. 383). Although Murray seems confident that students will find their own way to discovery with a little conferencing prompting, Sommers’ studies specifically found that students often are taught and tend to think of writing as a word-based activity. Students did not seem to understand writing in terms of global revisions, rather “The students understand the revision process as a rewording activity” (Sommers, 1980, p. 381). Sommers argues that teaching students strategies is an important part of the revision process, and that revision is not inherently known, but a learned activity. Thus, Sommers’ work suggests that there is a learning process embedded in students’ revisions. However, little research has explored this learning process, particularly from the student’s perspective.

**From Focus on Students to Focus on Teachers**

The early focus on students in the studies of revision and feedback dissipated and shifted to focus on the teacher in feedback research of the 1980s and 90s. Studies like Smith (1997) or Connors and Lunsford (1993) focused attention heavily on the rhetorical design or genre of teacher comments. When student voices have been included (Ferris, 1995; Straub, 1997), students’ responses have been non-specific in describing instances of revision or learning. Though several case studies (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Prior, 1995; Sperling 1994) have explored how students revise, the research questions in these studies did not focus on the processes by which students learn. Therefore, though this
body of work provides insight into half of the feedback dialogic, it does not relay the outcomes of feedback in terms of student uptake and learning.

**Teacher-Focused Research on Feedback**

Teachers are very interested in what they can do to influence student learning, and often overestimate their role in guiding student development. Naturally, then, teachers have frequently looked to their own or other teachers’ methods of constructing commentary in research for answers about student learning. Teachers’ self-focus in research has overstated the degree of control that teachers have in guiding student writing and development. Still, several findings from these teacher-focused studies have pointed to areas of improvement in teaching writing. Connors and Lunsford (1993) noted a gap between teacher practice and teacher theory of giving feedback. They drew from comments on 3,000 student papers (Connors & Lunsford, 1993, p. 205) to generate a description of the types of comments teachers gave to students. Connors and Lunsford (1993) found that despite the theoretical focus on purpose and audience, few actual teacher comments addressed these concerns. Teachers, then, may not be connecting theory with practice.

Ferris (2011) and Montgomery and Baker (2007) have also explored this disconnect between teacher ideals and teacher practice, continuing composition and second language writing feedback focus on the teacher’s role. Montgomery and Baker (2007) compared teacher perceptions of the comments they gave to L2 students to the actual teacher comments, and identified a discrepancy between perception and action in providing local and global feedback. They found that teachers tended to give a lot of
local feedback. However, they found that students and teachers were at 87% agreement about the feedback given, demonstrating that teachers and students seemed to share perceptions (Montgomery & Baker, 2007, p. 91). However, they do not identify whether students understood the feedback they just reported whether or not student perceived teachers as giving a little or a lot of local feedback.

Even Straub’s (2000) overview of best feedback practices focuses on the teacher to the exclusion of the student. Straub (2000) gives teachers a list of ways to construct their comments, and even provides an example of real comments on a real student paper. There is no discussion of how the student uses, if at all, these comments to develop her writing learning. The emphasis in Straub (2000) as with other studies (also see Chandler 2003) is placed on the teacher’s comment. This research does not investigate the student’s decision-making that contextualizes these teacher comments.

**A Minimal Role for Student Voices**

When student voices have been included in discussions of feedback and revision, their insight has been undersold with generalized statements of perception rather than describing particular instances of learning with textual evidence. Several feedback-focused studies have described student perceptions, gathered from surveys about how students feel about the comments they receive (Ferris, 1995; Straub, 1997). Findings indicate that students prefer feedback that addresses content as well as grammar, and prefer specific comments. Focusing on students’ preferences does suggest what students like. However, there is often a gap between students’ preferences and the feedback that helps them learn in the long term. For example, many teachers may have the experience
of students revisiting them long after the class has ended and thanking them for hard but
good long-term training. Though there may be some connection between what students
prefer and what helps them learn, the connections to learning and impact on student
revision was outside the purview of these studies. I suggest that more research on uptake
may help to fill in this gap in the current research.

Research into students’ perceptions initiates questions of agency and learning in
relation to teacher feedback, such as “when do students feel their ownership of text
threatened?” and “how does feedback help students become better writers?” For
example, Straub (1997) discovered that students were concerned about issues of
ownership and agency. Yet Straub’s (1997) work does not show how or when students
felt their ownership and agency was threatened by teacher comments, so it is difficult to
recommend ways that teachers can handle this problem in the writing classroom.

Also, Ferris’ (1995) study gave hope to teachers that students may in fact be
learning from feedback. Ferris surveyed 155 students in a process-based writing class
who had at least one other semester of process-oriented composition before this survey
was taken. The students reported significantly different reactions to teacher comments on
preliminary vs. final drafts, a new finding for the field of second language writing. This
began to answer the question, do students read teacher feedback? Ferris (1995) found that
students “paid great attention” to teacher comments on preliminary drafts (p. 39). Also,
Ferris (1995) reports, “students felt that their teachers’ feedback had indeed helped them
improve as writers because it helped them know what to improve or avoid in the future,
find their mistakes, and clarify their ideas” (p. 46). Though this finding indicates that
students “felt” that they learned and that teacher feedback “helped them improve as
writers’ Ferris (1995) does not explore whether students were actually as successful as they perceived themselves to be. Thus, both Ferris (1995) and Straub (1997) do include student voices, though they do not trace the impact of these student voices on the students’ revision choices.

Self-report of students’ perceptions has significant limitations when it is the only source of data. One of the great criticisms of this survey-perception approach comes from Flower and Hayes (1981). They suggest that students may not recall all of their writing problems or issues after the issue is resolved through revision. Ferris (1995) notes that, “the students may have been confused as to what their teachers actually did on the various drafts because they were relying on their memories to complete the survey” (p. 42). Thus, Ferris (1995) acknowledges the limits of memory in accurately reporting teacher feedback practices.

Further, self-reports often ignore the larger context of the feedback dialogic. Interestingly, Straub (1997) seems aware of the contextual limitation in his study as he comments, “Any analysis of comments must go beyond the superficial grammatical form and consider the voice and content of the comment and other formal markers that instantiate various relationships between teacher and student” (p. 99). Though recognizing that “various relationships between teacher and student” exist in the feedback interaction of commentary and revision, Straub (1997) does not provide this context. Without fully exploring the relationship between a particular teacher and a particular student, it is difficult to understand how students learned from some comments but not from others. Further, it is difficult to explain why some students were able to better uptake teacher commentary than others.
Sporadic Glimmers of Student Voices

Only a few case studies across the last thirty years have included student voices in discussions of feedback and revision. Each of these case studies demonstrates the complexity of the revision process, but they do not explore the students’ decision making that leads to learning. Instead, these studies stop short of connecting teacher commentary and student learning, focusing instead on how commentary leads to particular student revisions. Though this provides insight into student action, it does not explain thoroughly students’ decision making processes.

Case studies, such as Onore (1989), indicate that students may not always create a better product in the process of their revision and learning. Onore’s student Miranda did follow what seemed to Onore to be a good writing process: “...in short, [Miranda] did all that we might wish an inexperienced writer to do, and still her texts declined in overall quality from draft to draft” (p. 244). Miranda took ownership over her text and made substantial, global revisions, but still the text lacked in many areas of the writing product. From this example, Onore (1989) suggests, “If we adhere to a deficit model of the development of writing abilities, then Miranda’s writing is missing many important features. Through the lens of a rich developmental model, however, Miranda’s writing has improved” (Onore, 1989, p. 246). Miranda made learning strides in her writing process that simply weren’t reflected in her writing product. Here, Onore (1989) contrasts deficit with developmental, similar to the divide between product and process. Using the developmental model, it is more important that the student learned to become a better writer, rather than focusing on the limitations of her writing product. This finding prepares teachers for the fact that learning does not always mean a better writing product.
Case studies, particularly Tardy’s (2006) work, also describe how students’ past experiences with writing shape revision. Focusing on second language writers, Tardy (2006) found that as students became more confident in their disciplines, they gained “greater confidence in rejecting feedback that was not internally persuasive” (Tardy, 2006, p. 72). This seems to indicate that, with experience, students gained greater ownership and control over their texts and revision processes. This then points to the importance of understanding students’ previous learning experiences with writing to better understand how current learning takes place.

Case studies can give more social context to student learning than survey or other methodologies. Prior (1995) explores how Moira not only draws on her past experience, but how the process of feedback and revision is a very social process. Unlike previous work focused on the textual product, Prior’s inquiry explores how “…textual exchanges mediate personal development and social activity” (Prior, 1995, p. 293). This social dynamic helped enrich discussions of the feedback dialogic.

One strong advantage to case study research is its emphasis on the individual student. Each case or story unfolds in a unique way based on that particular student’s need. In first language writing research, Sperling’s (1994) findings show that teacher commentary is not consistent across students, but differs from individual to individual. In second language writing research, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) describe individual factors which may influence second language students’ revisions: “…misinterpretation of teacher comments, amount of content knowledge, effect of strongly-held beliefs, influence of classroom instruction, level of self-motivation, and pressures of other
commitments” (p. 162). All of these factors may influence students’ interpretation of teacher comments and their subsequent revisions.

Finally, Newkirk’s (1995) work on oral conferencing focuses on the cases of two students interacting with one teacher in one-to-one conferences. Newkirk (1995) provides a space in the form of interviews after the conferences for students to explain their motivations and interpretations driving their responses to teacher feedback. Newkirk (1995) asserts that a performance theory offers a way to explain students and teachers’ “competing intentions” (p. 195). Otherwise, in the interest of communication, these points of tension are often swept under the rug of polite conversation. By asking students if teacher questions surprised them, Newkirk was often able to ascertain how students interpreted the teachers’ comments, and to what degree they were confused. Ultimately, he noticed that few students directly asked teachers for clarification. As Newkirk (1995) writes, “It is extremely uncommon for a student to say “I’m not sure what you mean by?” even though they must constantly feel this way” (p. 204). Newkirk’s method of focused interviews where students were allowed to comment on teacher feedback offers a glimpse of the student voices as they grapple with teacher feedback. However, Newkirk does not extend his work to discuss how these tensions played out in the textual revisions the students made.

Overall, these few case studies offer a more complex description of revision than those of other studies. In particular, Prior (1995) discovered that, “Changes at one textual site sometimes triggered changes at another site” (p. 306). Prior’s student was able to connect teacher comments to multiple sections of the essays. This complicates research examining textual revisions only at the location of the comment (Beason, 1993).
Prior's (1995) work provides a jumping off point for future research tracing the complexity of teacher feedback and student revision.

In this case study of four first-year writers, I focus on providing evidence of how student interpret, use and learn from teacher commentary. It is through examining successful cases of student learning that teacher and researchers can explore under what conditions learning occurs so that they can focus on these situations and encourage student writing development. Students' revisions and self-report combined are evidence of their uptake and learning, and both are requisite for making strong claims of students' writing development.

**Learning Theories and Feedback**

Both cognitive (Flower and Hayes, 1981; Perl, 1979) and sociohistoric theories in the traditions of Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) have offered insight into the ways that students learn to become better writers. The concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976), as employed by Parr and Timperley (2010) in discussions of teacher feedback, focuses on student outcomes in the educational context of classroom learning and student writing development. Parr and Timperley (2010) describe how the teacher guides the students. Over the last several decades in composition, there has been a social/cognitive divide where cognitivist were critiqued for ignoring context (Bizzell, 1982) while those focused on a more social narrative description were critiqued for being imprecise in their descriptions (Perl, 1979). Those (such as Williams, 2004) who have sought to describe internal cognitive processes have done so with a theory (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) that gives a limited range of
description of students’ thought processes, providing either linear or mechanical models to describe cognition. Williams (2004) describes the ways in which ESL writers interpreted writing tutors’ comments in the writing center. She found that specific scaffolding moves made by the tutor seemed to help these students revise. However, the theoretical framework she used oversimplifies student revision by assuming that students “operate” or simply enact a textual revision without the planning and generating associated with global revision. Further, Williams does not clearly show how the ESL students learned over time from these tutor techniques. Instead, Williams (2004) research focuses on one draft and revision for each of five ESL writers.

In the next section of this chapter, I first discuss ways that cognitivists and their role have contributed to our understanding of feedback and revision. Secondly, I discuss ways that social theories have been used to describe student learning in feedback research. Thirdly, I describe theories that did attempt to describe student internal processes in a social context. Finally, I present a theory from education and cognitive psychology that introduces more detailed and specific terms for discussing students’ internal operations when writing and revising that may help describe ways in which they use teacher feedback. Through these terms, this dissertation study distinguishes between students’ understanding and students’ automatic revisions.

**Unpacking Processes of Student Writing and Revision**

One challenge to describing the internal processes by which students interpret and use teacher feedback in their revision processes is the intangible nature of these processes. Because students’ internal processes are internal, they are hard moves to
document, and much attention has been given to the methodology (like think aloud protocols and stimulated recall interviews) that can evoke these processes (see Fitzgerald, 1987 for an in-depth discussion of these methodologies tied to revision). Two of the seminal works that employ think-aloud protocols are Perl (1979) and Flower and Hayes (1981).

Perl (1979) developed an elaborate coding system to document the recursive moves of the writers in her case studies. What the tracing of these patterns revealed was that students, even 'unskilled college writers' have consistent, stable methods of writing and revising. This consistency suggests that students use strategies and a particular process that in many ways resembles that of more experienced writers. However, due to students' obsession with surface features and the idea of composing as a "cosmetic process" (Perl, 1979, p. 38), they wrote less flexible, less exploratory prose. Perl (1979) comments that students often became "locked into whatever is on the page" (p. 38), thus stifling their revisions. Perl (1979) states that teachers of writing need to look into the patterns that students have already established rather than trying to teach new methods of writing. Perl's (1979) research reflects a focus on the student that has been much lacking from more recent work examining response and revision. Here, as with Onore's (1989) case studies, Perl (1979) documents that students' processes often differ from their final products, an important finding that encourages researchers of response and revision to investigate both the student's internal processes as well as the student's text or product.

Flower and Hayes (1981) developed a fairly complex model to explain students' revision processes. They use think-aloud protocol data to extrapolate a theory of composing processes that, like other theories of cognitive processes (Anderson &
Krathwohl, 2001) is hierarchical and goal-directed. However, Flower and Hayes (1981) assertion that these processes are “distinctive” separates the processes artificially in ways that do not allow for recursivity or overlap. This is a significant limitation of the theory that may have led compositionists to view it as rigid or lock-step.

Perl (1979) and Flower and Hayes (1981) generate elaborate transcripts of the composing process. However, they fall short of describing how these intricate patterns impacted students’ subsequent writings or how students’ meta-awareness demonstrated learning from these patterns. Had these studies used a strong theoretical learning framework, they may have been able to make more arguments about how students develop as writers. Further, they may have been able to identify ways that the particular teacher and particular student in a particular classroom made feedback and revision decisions. Embracing these social factors would have increased understanding of how each student composes, and what factors trigger learning.

**Socially-situated Learning Theories and Feedback and Revision**

From the 1970s, with the bridging of psychology and education, the terms *scaffolding* and *zone of proximal development* came into prominence in both educational research and the writing classroom as ways of describing how experienced individuals helped novices learn. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) used the term scaffolding to describe how a learner may reach potential performance through the aid of an adult or teacher. In terms of feedback, this scaffolding may be providing specific suggestions for student writing revision, or pointing the student in ways that they can develop their writing. This theory is focused heavily on the role of the teacher, and it is not surprising
given this teacher-focus that research in feedback has often used scaffolding to describe
the feedback and revision process (Parr & Timperley, 2010). In their study of K12
students, Parr and Timperley (2010) described the way that teachers supported or
scaffolded student learning through feedback. However, Parr and Timperley (2010)
focus too heavily on students reaching pre-determined learning outcomes, and on
‘forward’ progress needed to reach these outcomes. Their position suggests that learning
is always a forward moving experience, the kind of linearity learning theorists warn
against.

In another sociohistoric learning theory, Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal
development (ZPD) described the learner’s range between actual and potential
development. The advantage to this theory was that it demonstrated how assistance
played a role in supporting learning and development. In keeping with the focus on
students in this study, The ZPD focuses on the learner. Also, this theory emphasizes the
need for social interaction with another individual (though not necessarily the teacher) for
student learning and development. Vygotsky (1978) differentiates between what the
student is ready for alone and what can be done with support from a more experienced
peer or teacher. The ZPD, then, is the “distance between the actual developmental level
as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as
determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more
capable peers” (p. 86). Vygotsky’s work has been cited widely in composition, and
appears to hold some weight in studies of feedback (Phelps, 2000; Prior, 1995). His work
explains how students incrementally move from potential to actual performance, a helpful
tool in explaining why with more experience and interaction with the community tend to
become stronger writers. Due to the socially-situated nature of this theory and its emphasis on the learner, I considered using this theory to describe how students interpret and use teacher feedback. However, Vygotsky does not help me unpack the processes that bridge the new and known, as this theory focuses more on the social support necessary for learners to develop. In this dissertation, I needed a theory that helped me explain how the learner interacted with social support and what processes the learner experienced in developing.

Socially-situated learning theories provide researchers of feedback and revision with useful ways to describe the teacher/student interactions with feedback, however, they do not support discussions of how students internalize feedback, re-shape it, and then apply it to revision. For insights into how students make use of teacher comments, then, a more cognitive framework is needed to represent the ways students recognize that feedback has been given, develop an understanding of the feedback, make decisions about the feedback and then ultimately craft a revised text in response to this feedback.

**Frameworks for Describing Students’ Revision**

Both Anson (1989) and Williams (2004) begin to identify students’ processes, but do not connect these processes to student learning. Only two studies of feedback and student revision thus far have attempted to integrate theories of internal process and student learning into their discussions. These are studies that have started the work, and I will deepen it through using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). My study investigates how students’ processing of teacher feedback leads to student understanding and learning.
Anson (1989) attempts to map a stage theory of writing development on to students' readings of teacher commentary using the terms dualism, relativism and committed relativism. These stages give an initial look at how students' perspectives may change with their epistemological development, and how that may impact their writing. Anson's categories are general, and seem to be somewhat linear in progression, giving little flexibility to the model. Still, he attempts to frame students' writing and use of teacher commentary as developmental.

Williams (2004) also drew on a learning theory that addressed different stages of students' processing in revision. From Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Williams (2004) summarizes three main stages of processing that take place during student revision: detection/evaluation/comparison, diagnosis/identification, and operation/execution/correction (p. 174). Though these stages give more of a range of student action and process than Anson's (1989) application of Perry, both the second and third stage Williams (2004) describes do not focus on student understanding or student development. Particularly the Operation stage assumes that students decide on a course of action and then just do it. Anderson and Krathwhol (2001) describe the final stage as a much more complex process of generation of text. The problem with describing student revision as "operation" is that it connotes that students are just doing what the teacher says, as though there is one answer to the problem that is posed in the comment.

If the goal of providing feedback is student uptake of that feedback in the revision process, then more research is needed into how this process occurs. A three-stage process may not be sufficient to describe the gradual awareness students' gain of teacher meaning in feedback, nor does a three-stage model differentiate between students
revising for the teacher vs. revising for themselves. How can we prove that students aren’t just copying the teacher’s correction, but that they are internalizing the lesson for future use? Given the plentiful interview data I collected where students reflected on their writing and revision process, I wanted a theory to help me categorize the different moves they were making as they read, interpreted and adapted teacher commentary. I wanted a theory that could help me distinguish between an automated correction of text, and a complex learning process imbedded in revision. Most importantly, I sought a theory that could help me differentiate between multiple levels of student understanding of teacher feedback. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy offers some ways of understanding students’ experiences that are more complex than other learning theories, and it offers a division of cognitive operations that distinguishes between performance of a revision and learning from a revision.

**Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy**

Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) was designed to help educators create common objectives in student learning, primarily for testing purposes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The original taxonomy focused only on one dimension of learning: cognitive processes. This was pertinent to my study as it described how students moved towards learning, through what increasingly complex cognitive understandings. However, in the 1956 taxonomy, the process of evaluation was placed as the highest order skill, whereas in the revision, creation (revision) is considered the highest order skill. The narrower focus and less flexible model of the old taxonomy caused Bloom’s original taxonomy to be revised by his student, Anderson, and renamed Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.
(Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). It is a learning theory with an educational focus that was developed by both educational specialists and cognitive theorists to describe learning objectives for classroom learning. Assessment specialists also weighed in on the revision of the taxonomy, and brought in issues of alignment—whether what the teacher assesses matches the learning objective. The result of this collaboration was a student-focused theory of cognitive operations grounded in educational goals.

This theory is founded on the understanding that to learn, one must have a student action followed by a knowledge outcome. The grid for charting teacher objectives according to cognition and knowledge is given below:

Four types of knowledge are discussed: factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 29). The goal in describing these different types or levels of knowledge was to draw attention to the overuse of factual knowledge in schools, and to encourage the development of metacognitive knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). To illustrate the difference between the different levels of knowledge, consider learning about semi-colons in writing. Factual knowledge is that

Table 1: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy Matrix

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
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<td>Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
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</table>
semi-colons follow independent clauses. Conceptual knowledge is the knowledge that semi-colons are part of a larger group of punctuation marks that indicate pauses in thought. Procedural knowledge demands that student know when to use semi-colons in their writing, a how-to or applied use of knowledge. Finally, metacognitive knowledge may be a student’s insight into their own knowledge about semicolons. These different types of knowledge shape teacher objectives, and represent teacher goals and outcomes for student learning.

The other axis of this revised taxonomy is the cognitive process axis (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). However, I will describe these processes as operations, as students did not learn from the act of processing the feedback as much from the metacognitive awareness and performance on subsequent assignments. These operations are student-focused, as they describe the student action and are represented by verbs. The six major cognitive operations are Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 67-68). Each of these major operations is divided up into sub-categories. For example, within the category Create, there are the sub-categories of Generating, Planning and Producing. These elements of create sound strikingly similar to discovery (Generating), pre-writing (Planning), and writing/re-writing (Producing) as described in Murray’s (1972) seminal description of writing as a process. Not only is revision a textual action then, it is also a cognitive series of operations. Where this theory adds to earlier descriptions of revision is the inclusion of more specific operations to explain how student writers get to the creation stage of writing. Instead of Perl’s (1979) or Flower and Hayes (1981) elaborate think-aloud protocol analyses that examined every slight recursive movement of composing, this
theory allows for a broader, more generalized description of what operations the student uses, to what learning outcome.

It is important also to recognize that the cognitive operations increase in complexity from REMEMBER to CREATE, from rote to meaningful learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 5). However, this does not mean that students make linear progression through the stages. This theoretical framework thus places writing and revision as the most advanced cognitive skill, one that is supported by many other cognitive operations. Further, this theory does not specify that these cognitive operations need be internal. Instead, I argue from my findings that these operations can be documented through interview and student self-report as well as observation and textual analysis.

Of the six operations, five stand out in my findings as important for discussion. The only operation I do not discuss is APPLY, as it refers often to automated revision or EXECUTING where the student isn't learning, just doing. In cases where the student may be IMPLEMENTING, or using the feedback in unfamiliar contexts, the emphasis is still on a procedure, and does not reflect the complexity of revision or learning to become a better writer. Therefore, emphasis in this dissertation is placed on CREATION instead of APPLY.

The first two, REMEMBER and UNDERSTAND, distinguish between students' following a teacher comment mindlessly and students truly UNDERSTANDING why the comment was written. In chapter three, I describe the operations that students used such as INFERRING (a part of UNDERSTANDING) to support their learning and writing development.
Analyzing and Evaluation are also important operations for students in the writing and revision process. Analyzing includes "learning to determine the relevant or important pieces of a message (differentiating), the ways in which the pieces of a message are organized (organizing), and the underlying purpose of the message (attributing)" (Anderson & Krathwohl, p. 79, emphasis original). Analyzing involves more than just students decoding teacher commentary; it teases apart how students interpret and make meaning of teacher comments. This is particularly evident on points where the student disagreed with the teacher, and in interviews with me, the students orally analyzed the comments and then evaluated the comments. In chapter 4, I describe how students broke down the complex messages of the teachers' feedback and then critiqued or made judgments about how and if they should address the comments through revision.

The final stage, CREATION, is useful in explaining how the revision encapsulates a complex series of student actions. It is composed of not only PRODUCING text, but GENERATING new ideas and PLANNING how to organize these ideas in new ways to form revised texts. Student learning was determined after the creation stage, where students either self-reported their learning or evidenced learning by enacting revisions in later papers that had been prompted by earlier comments. Each of these five and its subcategories are listed below to chart the terminology that will shape this dissertation's discussions (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 68-69).

To describe these terms further, I turn to Mayer, a contributor and cognitive psychologist who helped develop the cognitive processes axis of the taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. xxviii). The first important concept is that of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember: recognize and recall</td>
<td>Identify (from long-term memory) or Retrieve information (from long-term memory) Example: I've seen this before....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand: interpret, exemplify, classify,</td>
<td>Recognize similarities and differences, and &quot;construct meaning from instructional messages&quot;— Example: My teacher told me to_____ because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarize, infer, compare and explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze: differentiating, organizing and attributing</td>
<td>Compare but select for the most important or relevant information. Unpack the gist of teacher comments and what revision is called for. Example: My teacher wrote interesting, but that really means that I should add more content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate: checking and critiquing</td>
<td>Critical thinking about the feedback that has been given. Here, the student may discern the pros and cons to enacting the revision that is called for by the teacher. Example: I thought I already did that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create: generate, plan, produce</td>
<td>“Put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole.” Example: I rewrote this section to_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember (Mayer, 2002, p. 227). This means that, in order to learn, students need to first identify or recognize the concept from something they learned previously. This is a type of remembering or recall that draws from students’ prior knowledge of a concept or idea.

To describe these terms further, I turn to Mayer, a contributor and cognitive psychologist who helped develop the cognitive processes axis of the taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. xxviii). The first important concept is that of remember (Mayer, 2002, p. 227). This means that, in order to learn, students need to first identify or recognize the concept from something they learned previously. This is a
type of remembering or recall that draws from students' prior knowledge of a concept or idea.

A second important concept that Mayer (2002) describes is that of UNDERSTANDING (p. 228). In order for students to have meaningful or more than memorized learning, they need to UNDERSTAND or ascribe meaning to the concepts that they recognize or identify. One of the ways students come to UNDERSTAND is through creating a generalizing principle, and this occurs through repeating examples or illustrations of a problem. This concept of UNDERSTANDING thus builds on the earlier concept of REMEMBERING, in a layering of students’ operations of thought. This is a complex process that is of a higher order than just noticing that the comments are of the same structure.

Finally, Mayer’s (2002) concept of CREATE most closely describes the type of revising that students are doing in this process (p. 231). Revision is more than just text production. This process has the sub-categories of GENERATING, PLANNING and PRODUCING, both of which are needed for students to revise and generate new text in light of the teacher’s comment. In essence, students are CREATING a new product through this process of revision. This is the highest order operation of the cognitive dimension, and demands much cognitively of students. It assumes that students REMEMBER and UNDERSTAND the concept, even ANALYZE and EVALUATE what the comment means. Students can take comments and not only apply them but re-generate new material with this teacher input.

This theory is situated in education, and is written primarily for teacher’s use. This theory assumes that teachers’ goals are based around student learning, and
presupposes that teachers need a framework for explicitly stating their objectives for student learning. Thus, this theory assumes that motivation to help students learn is driving all teacher actions in the classroom, like feedback. Unlike other theories that assume the teacher as just a reader, this theory assumes that teachers have a stake in student learning that influences what comments are given and what comments are held back. This fits well with composition’s inherent pedagogical focus. Thus, the assumption in this theory is that the processes described are leading towards student learning rather than simply incidental data. This theory is also strongly focused on students and student action, a piece that has been missing from much of feedback research (Murphy, 2000). Finally, this theory offers more specific categories of cognitive processes than previous theories, and through these terms, we may be more specific in our descriptions of how student learning occurs.

A major criticism that could be raised by researchers in response to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy would be its categorization and boxes. If this theory is treated rigidly, it could be seen as a linear process of cognition that leads to composing. However, the authors encourage adaptation and heuristic use of the theory (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Thus, for this dissertation, the terms REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and CREATE are used for descriptive purposes, and it is possible that student data falls outside of these apriori categories. What these terms do provide is a guiding vocabulary and framework for untangling the complex composing processes of students, particularly beginning, first-year writers.

In this dissertation, I argue that this theory facilitates discussions of how these processes lead to student learning. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl,
helps teachers identify and describe ways that students remember, understand and create revisions. The terminology, and the lens it offers, reveals the complexity of students’ revising process using teacher commentary and sheds light on conditions which elicit student learning.

**Listening to Student Voices**

The calls to include student voices (Murphy, 2000) and adopt a learning-focused theory to frame discussions of feedback and revision (Phelps, 2000) demand that more attention be paid to how students learn through feedback and revision. So much of the research on feedback has been acontextual or one-sided in its presentation of the feedback dialogue. Even the studies that do provide context (such as the case studies described above) do not provide a theoretical framework to extend findings to discussions of student learning: the supposed goal of teaching and feedback. In order to unite theory and practice (Fife & O’Neill, 2001), it is important to revise our methodologies and theories of examining teacher feedback to re-focus attention on what the student writer is doing, and how students’ textual decisions are shaped by tensions between authorship and recognition of teachers’ expertise that result in eventual learning. My current project is an attempt to answer these concerns.

This dissertation examines student revision in the context of the first-year writing classroom, using multiple data sources to create a rich case-study description of how students use teacher feedback when they revise across a semester. Also, this study uses a learning theory lens to examine not only what revision or social/textual actions students do, but what internal operations students experience as they revise and learn. My goal is
to describe in detail operations by which students revise so that teachers and researchers may have an increased understanding of what students do to learn through reading and using teacher feedback.

Three central research questions guided my study:

- How do students uptake or use teacher feedback?
- What individual factors may impact student uptake in feedback and revision?
- How do students negotiate feedback in ways that maintain their ownership over the text?

In Chapter I, I have outlined some of the gaps in existing research, both in inquiry on feedback and in theoretical frameworks used in composition to describe learning. I have demonstrated that our field’s focus on the teacher’s perspective has neglected the student voices that are integral to understanding how students learn from teacher feedback. I have also suggested that existing theories used in composition, from the ever-popular Vygotsky (1978) to the more recent Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have insufficiently described students’ decision making processes as they revise. Finally, I have recommended that we turn to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) for more complex, recursive descriptions of developmental operations embedded in student learning.

In Chapter II, I discuss the methodology that shaped this study, and describe why case-study methodology is particularly suited to this kind of exploration. I explain how stimulated recall measures such as text-based interview and a writing reactions protocol that I developed help access these internal operations, and document students’ recursive
revision and learning. I rely heavily on qualitative research techniques such as triangulating observation, text analysis and interview to give a complex picture of students’ composing and revision experiences.

Chapter III describes ways that students progress from REMEMBER to UNDERSTAND to finally the CREATION stage of revision using examples from the interview and textual data. Students demonstrated that when a feedback point was repeated, whether across multiple essays or within one essay, they both UNDERSTOOD and were able to successfully revise or CREATE new text. Also, when students were evaluated, either through grades or praise, they seemed to better UNDERSTAND the teacher’s comments. Nonetheless, this UNDERSTANDING did not take place for all students. I argue in this chapter that intervening factors such as language and education may inhibit students’ ability to understand and create substantive, successful revisions. Thus, it is not the form of the comment, but the individual teacher/student interaction that impacts student UNDERSTANDING and learning.

Chapter IV unpacks the complex social interaction surrounding the use of feedback, particularly the power differential between teacher and student. Drawing on literature discussing the issue of appropriation and agency, I frame this discussion as one that complements discussion understand, by emphasizing the operations of analyze and evaluate. This is a socially-situated discussion of teacher/student interaction, and I document the ways that students grapple with these social tensions in the texts they create and re-create.

In Chapter V, I describe patterns in students’ operations and the implications for teaching writing, particularly how this may re-shape our understandings of how and when
to give feedback to students. Also, I suggest several avenues for future research to build the field's understanding of how students uptake teacher feedback through revision.
CHAPTER II

QUALITATIVE METHOD

In this dissertation I interviewed and observed students and analyzed their major essays to determine how students read, interpret and uptake teacher feedback. In this study, I explore students’ actions and cognitive operations with teacher commentary, not simply their perceptions or their feelings. This study was designed to draw composition’s attention to student voices in the feedback dialogic. I used methods such as stimulated-recall, text-based interviews and a writing reactions protocol, to trace students’ learning through multiple data sources. Text analysis and classroom observation also provided evidence of student learning and writing development. Through these varied data collection methods, I was able to discover not only why students made the revision choices they did, but how student agency and teacher appropriation played a role in student learning and the feedback dialogic. Findings from this study suggest a re-framing of composition’s research on feedback to include the student more prominently.

As Murphy (2000) comments, “To my mind, the missing link in much of the research on response to writing is what students make of their teacher’s responses, what they bring and contribute to the knowledge-construction process occurring in the interaction between teacher and student and among other members of the classroom community” (p. 82). Feedback is a communicative process where both teachers and students contribute to the interpretation and meaning of commentary but previous
research has tended to focus on only the teacher's processes. My study aims to examine students' perspectives on this issue, building insight into the complexities of feedback and revision. More recently, Hyland and Hyland (2006) have acknowledged that "The factor of student agency and decision making has not always been fully explored in the research on feedback" (p. 220). This study will emphasize the students' voices and provide insights into the cognitive operations of feedback that have only been cursorily examined in previous research.

Another gap in the research is the focus on texts as evidence of revision and use of teacher feedback to the exclusion of student self-report. I aimed to discover how students process and use teacher written feedback in revising, both the cognitive operations that undergird revision decisions and the textual actions made in the revising process. To give even more context than just the classroom-situated texts, I examined teacher/student pairings through four interviews with each of four students. Each student interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. I also interviewed the two teachers twice during the semester for an hour each time. I gleaned information about how this interaction between commentary and revision built and changed over time, over the course of a 15 week spring semester, particularly during the months of March, April and May. I analyzed student behaviors through class observations of two English 102 (first-year writing) classes, and used context-sensitive textual analysis (Huckin, 1999) to analyze each of the four students' three major essays. Through stimulated recall text-based interviews about students' essay revisions, I focused on students' cognitive as well as social experiences, as well as examining how social negotiation and motivation were important to students writing and revising.
Research Questions

The following questions guided this study of the first-year writing classroom:

- How do students process teacher written feedback?
- What student processes lead to student uptake of teacher feedback?
- What factors in the teacher’s feedback impact student uptake in feedback and revision?
- How do students negotiate their ownership of the text in the feedback process?

To answer this gap in the research and embrace a more contextual approach, I situate my research in the semester long first-year writing classroom, and focus on a varied pool of participants (native and non-native speakers of English, traditional and non-traditional students.)

Qualitative Case Study

This study is a qualitative study of four student cases. Huckin (2004) writes, “A qualitative approach focuses rather on both explicit and implicit concepts, and empowers the researcher to use his or her judgment” (p. 15). The rich description of qualitative research allowed me to extrapolate information about students’ internal cognitive processes to better describe how they learned. The case study method allowed me to trace this learning in individuals (Prior, 1995) and this enabled me to also explore how individual factors (as mentioned by Conrad & Goldstein, 1999) impacted student use of teacher feedback and revision. Case studies are useful for describing in particular how
something occurs, and the factors that impact the event: two central questions driving this study.

Case studies place great emphasis on situating the data in context, and use that context as a lens for examining findings, thus by using case studies I would be filling the gap left by earlier, acontextual work. In the past, Anson (1989) cautions researchers of feedback to consider that many of the existing studies of commentary have been decontextualized. Also, Goldstein (2001) has complained that “the research [on feedback] has largely been noncontextual and nonsocial, focused largely on texts” (p. 77). I answer this need by drawing data from multiple sources and demonstrating how students—in action—respond to teacher feedback. The case study method is one that has been used to describe feedback and revision practices for several decades (see Straub’s 2006 anthology of feedback studies). However, as discussed in chapter I, few studies have included the student’s perspective or a learning theory framework to discuss student uptake of teacher feedback. This study aims to focus on bringing students voices and learning theory into discussions of feedback and revision in ways that reveal how student uptake of teacher feedback occurs.

Institutional Context and Course

The institution targeted for this study is a branch campus of a large state university in the southwest, where many students are prepared either to 1) transfer to the main campus or 2) to complete two year degrees in vocational training programs on campus. This campus has some familiarity with researchers conducting human research, but for most students and staff, this type of research is very new. For this reason,
frequent checks to assess participant comfort and to answer any participant questions were made.

The institution, though affiliated with the large state university, has a separate budget over which it has control. Also, composition instruction, though tied in part to main campus, is largely independent. However, the department chair makes a strong effort through repeated observations and evaluations, to maintain a cohesive curriculum in the first year writing classroom.

This campus is exceptionally diverse, and has been designated by the state as a Hispanic-serving institution. International students from the main campus may take classes at this campus as the classes are seen as “easier.” Many students at this campus have other family and work obligations that limit the time they have to devote to study.

English 101 and 102, this campus’ equivalent to first-year writing, were students’ introduction to writing in academia, and was often their first experience with revision. English 101 focused more heavily on grammar and organization of an essay, while English 102 integrated more literature and more types or modes of essay writing. English 102 is the focus of this study as students have some experience with feedback and revision after completing their first semester of English 101. This way, students had language for describing how teachers gave feedback, and what the goals of the revision processes were. Lengths of assignments in English 102 ranged from 3-6 pages. Instructors claimed to use a ‘genre’ approach but seemed to focus more on the modes in their assignments. In Stephan’s English 102 class, the assignments were a causal argument, and argument of definition and then the student’s choice of argument ‘genre’.
In Maggie’s English 102 class, the assignments were rhetorical analysis, cause/effect and definition essay. The main focus of the course was writing.

There were several unique goals in English 102 that made this site an interesting one to study feedback. Teachers Stephan and Maggie followed the below core objectives for the course. Students in English 102 were asked to:

- Read and analyze difficult texts accurately and carefully
- Establish purpose in analysis or argument essays
- Choose an appropriate genre or rhetorical strategy
- Define and address audience
- Research effectively and use sources properly and ethically
- Employ the conventions of Standard English by expressing ideas clearly, writing sentences well and using good grammar.
- Use revision to improve writing

(These are the core objectives as described in the department chair’s core syllabus)

From these objectives, it is clear that grammar plays an important role in English 102 writing instruction. The students and teachers may have an increased focus on these language issues due to the diversity of the student population. Also, revision is mentioned as a core requirement. In this class, students are expected to write a rough draft, have peers review it and then revise the paper and turn it in for a grade. At that time, the teacher provides not only a grade, but both marginal and end comments. All students are given an option to revise the graded paper within two weeks, though in a few cases of low grades, revision is required.
Teachers at this institution grade students according to a modified departmental rubric. Each teacher had some flexibility in creating categories to suit their assignments, but some core focus on language, organization and content was essential. Maggie’s rubrics contained the categories structure, content, critical thinking, MLA, expression, sentence boundaries and grammar/punctuation. Stephan’s rubrics contained the categories purpose, genre, organization, audience needs, sentences, grammar/mechanics and MLA. Stephan weighted the content and organization heavier than the grammar/language concerns, for Maggie, each category was equally weighted. However, students did not look at nor reference the rubrics often in interviews. This may have been due to the fact that most students received similar marks for all of the categories.

**Participants and Recruitment**

The participants in this study reflect the diversity of the contemporary classroom, in that the students are both first and second language learners, and both traditional and non-traditional students. Moves in the literature on writing have already been made to connect composition and issues of second language writing. Matsuda (2006), in particular, has noted that the growing presence of second language writers in mainstream composition courses calls for an integration of first and second language writing research. This way, teachers of writing can better address student writers’ needs in the coming years. As Matsuda concludes, “To work effectively with the student population in the twenty-first century, all composition teachers need to re-imagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences
is the default” (2006, p. 649). Thus, one of the participants in this study is a second
language writer, two are non-traditional older students and one is a ‘traditional’ student.

Table 3: Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Reactions to commentary from interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>English 102 Teacher—six writing courses</td>
<td>MA in English</td>
<td>“I want them [students] to know that I’m reading every little thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephan</td>
<td>English 102 Teacher—five writing courses</td>
<td>PhD in Literature</td>
<td>“It’s okay if they [students] ignore one or two comments here or there as long as they get the sum total of where it’s [the commentary] going.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoc</td>
<td>Traditionally-aged student, Native speaker of Vietnamese</td>
<td>EFL grammar courses, Timed-essay Vietnamese courses</td>
<td>“I can’t understand what she [teacher] still needs me to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Traditionally-aged student, Native speaker of English</td>
<td>High School AP English</td>
<td>“I got a good grade on the first [draft], so just changing a few things is okay.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Non-traditionally-aged student, Native speaker of English</td>
<td>High School Diploma in 1995</td>
<td>“It was helpful seeing the same comments over and over again because then you know what you really need to focus on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Non-traditionally-aged student, Native speaker of English</td>
<td>GED and GED writing courses</td>
<td>“I’ll go back and reassess what my thesis is again, and see how that particular paragraph needs to be clearer.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A balance of genders was desired for this study in order to examine a range of relationship dynamics in the classroom. One male teacher was recruited, and two of his female students chose to participate. A female teacher was also recruited, and two of her male students chose to participate.

Teachers were contacted through the departmental listserv, and given a week to respond to a brief e-mail introducing the research and providing a copy of the consent letter and screening questionnaire. Three teachers responded either in person or via e-mail to this request, and as they were the only three teachers to respond, were selected for participation in the study. The teachers all had experience teaching at this institution and felt that they could balance their work with participation in the study. One teacher did not complete the study, thus he and his students are excluded from this discussion.

Students were recruited during classroom visits to the teachers participating in the study. In the first few minutes of the class, the study was presented and any students interested in more information were given a copy of the consent form and the student questionnaire. Students then took some time (ranging from 1 to several days) to consider the participating. Students returned the consent forms and questionnaires once they had determined to participate in the study. Initially, eight students volunteered for the study. However, due to a variety of factors including age (one student was 17), not returning e-mails and dropping out of the course, only four students were selected for data analysis and inclusion in this study’s findings.
Data Collection

I conducted observation, interviewed students, asked students to do a writing reactions protocol, interviewed teachers and collected/analyzed student essays over the course of the 15 week semester. I scheduled 30 minute interviews with students after they revised, and conducted approximately four per student over the course of the semester. I scheduled 60-minute teacher interviews at the mid-point and then at the end of the semester to get a sense of students’ development and overall interactions with the teacher. I observed classes at the mid-point of the semester, three quarters of the way through the semester, and at the end of the semester.

Classroom Observations

The two different classrooms of English 102 were observed three times during the semester: once when papers were handed back and once during a peer review or whole class review of student work, and once at the end of the semester. Both classes followed a pattern of rough draft followed by peer review, with the final draft receiving teacher comments and the option given for student revision. Both teachers expected students to use their comments for revisions.

Double column notes were taken during these classroom observations, with special attention given to the participants in the study. The focus of observations included student participation, rapport between student and teacher, and interpretation and reading of teacher commentary during the class. These observations helped define the context of
the students' work, and identified places where they were unclear and ways that they met their writing needs during class time.

**Student Interviews**

Students were interviewed approximately four times over the course of the semester, and each interview was held at a time and place comfortable for the student. Candice was only interviewed three times, as she only revised once during the semester. Student interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were digitally recorded. Student interviews were text-based, meaning that the student's draft with teacher comments and the student's revision were both present on the table between us as we discussed the essays. Students were interviewed within a week of their revisions in most cases, in order to maintain proximity to the action that was the focus of the study: revision. These interviews served as the foundation for interpreting student textual revisions, and helped me understand what students were thinking as they revised. Only Stephanie and John completed the writing reactions protocol, which did help in teasing out points of tension with their instructors' feedback. Stephanie and John had the tendency to claim that they understood and used all of their teacher's feedback, which proved not to be the case when reading through their writing reactions protocols.

These interviews were guided by a series of pre-determined questions based on my earlier work (Kramer 2007). See Appendix C for a detailed list of these questions. However, room was given for students to also interject their own responses and questions through the open-ended framework of the interviews. Open-ended interviews with follow-up questions “consider tangents as important clues” (Luttrell, 2000, p. 502). In
fact, over the course of the semester, as students became more comfortable with me and the interview process, they would often initiate and guide the interview session, allowing me to interject follow-up questions at key points.

The first student interview was designed in part to discover how students’ background and what other contextual factors such as language and education may impact their revision decisions. I did know some about the students at the first interview based on their age and language background that they had provided me on a brief questionnaire. I used this information to kick-off the interviews and show that I knew something about them. For example, I knew Candice was a non-traditional student. I asked her if she had completed high school or a GED program, and then I asked “did you write for the GED program?” This prompted Candice to explain her story of raising her children first before going back to school, and then taking an extra writing class during her GED. Following this discussion, I wanted to know how much experience she had with the specific types of assignments she was experiencing in Stephan’s classroom, so I asked, “Um, so when was the first time you’ve written something like this paper that you just finished for Stephan, or is this the first paper of its kind that you’ve done?” She was able to then tell me some of the steps in her past experience that helped prepare her to write in Stephan’s class.

In Stephanie’s interview, I asked questions like “What were the comments that you used,” but she responded “I used them all.” I paused and waited for her to continue, which she did and she gave examples of comments that she used on the first page of the essay. Stephanie led the discussion as she chronologically discussed the comments on the first and second pages of the essay. However, in this chronological discussion, she
did notice one comment about transitions that she didn’t use. Thus, this study’s focus on
discussing teacher comments seemed to draw students’ attention to comments that they
may have otherwise overlooked.

My interviews with John and Hoc from the beginning took a more casual air, and
I started the first interview with John by stating “You got your paper back yesterday” and
asking for his thoughts. He was able to explain how he had received the feedback and
some of his initial impressions. In Hoc’s interview, I rephrased what I read of the
teacher’s comments and asked for his reactions. For each interview with each student
participant, I tried to use information I knew about the student to initiate conversation. I
tried to return to questions like “what comments did you use” but in the larger frame of a
casual conversation. This seemed to make the students feel comfortable enough to
expansively discuss how and why they used particular teacher comments.

I conducted the second and third interviews during the revision process, but not at
the time of drafting as students’ schedules simply did not allow for this immediate
follow-up. In Hoc’s second interview, I looked at his older draft and remarked, “I see
you have a lot of crossing out here.” This generated discussion of what he had crossed
out and why and how this improved his next draft. For John, who did a writing reactions
protocol, I asked him about what he wrote on the draft and how this connected to the
revision. I commented, “I see you made some comments, like “what is ok?” I think these
are you? Are these you?” to which John responded that he didn’t understand Maggie’s
comments at those locations. For Candice, I asked her to explain what she did, but
followed up with the comment, “I know you revised it this week-end, right?” which
initiated a narrative of her writing and revision process. Stephanie began our second
interview describing her essay topic choices and comparing her first essay with her second and third. I was able to interject small statements like “Tell me about that” to elicit explanations of how and where she used teacher feedback. Largely the conversations in the second and third interviews focused on questions of how students used teacher comments, which ones were most helpful, and ultimately, what they were trying to accomplish in their revisions. My role in guiding these discussions was minimal, with frequent mm hmms and repetition or rephrasing of the students’ responses for clarification. Students seemed strongly engaged in discussing how and what they did in the process of revision.

A fourth interview at the end of the course allowed students some distance from the material, and gave them time to reflect in a way that provided big-picture understanding (Anson, 2000). A general question “Overall, how does this semester compare to other semesters of taking writing classes? What have been some good points? What have been some challenges?” opened up the discussion for the student to comment on the overall writing experience. This was followed by the question, “How would you describe your relationship with your teacher? How has that helped or (not) your writing?” This directly addressed the question of teacher/student relationship impacting feedback and revision that was touched on in the initial interviews. Also, the broader question targeted the context of the revisions, and gave students room to identify contextual factors that may have impacted their revision decisions over the course of the semester. Students raised contextual factors such as time, grade motivation and topic investment during this stage in the interview process. However, students needed very little prompting in these discussions, and it was sufficient for me to interject “Tell me a little more about
that” or even “mm hmm.” Further, both Stephanie and John reflected on how the writing reactions protocol influenced their writing and revision process.

**Writing Reactions Protocol**

Another aid to student recall was a writing reactions protocol, a kind of stimulated recall that I developed for this project. I asked students to write down reactions to teachers’ comments if they wished to in the margins, next to the teacher’s comments. I directed students to write brief comments that helped me see what they were thinking as they were reading the comments and revising. Only two students elected to try writing their reactions: Stephanie and John. Stephanie took these directions to write next to teacher comments as really writing to both her teacher and to me. In her final end note on her third essay, she wrote a fairly lengthy note to me about how and what she did in the process of revision. She even directed the paragraph to me explicitly: “Beth, I did a major rewrite of this, eliminated some things (ideas) and added more evidence to prove my point. Big revision. Added additional source. Revision took as long as writing my original paper. I’m using this for my final.” Stephanie’s comments gave an overview of her writing goals and purpose. Also, see figure 1 to see more precisely how Stephanie wrote her comments next to Stephan’s comments.

John’s comments in the writing reactions protocol were brief, and he would often draw a line connecting his comment to the teacher’s comment or draw a circle around his comments. He wrote the most comments on the second essay, and made notes to himself through these comments about the kinds of revisions he planned to make, like “Maybe some background on ancient and modern games we play” or “try to flow like H20” or
even "second paragraph would suit this well". However, John also identified comments that were confusing to him, evident by his comments "What's wrong here" or "Who's Craven?"

Other students, like Candice and Hoc, commented that they just got a general sense of the teacher's comment as they revised through their papers. For the two students who did write their reactions, I was able to identify places of disagreement and misunderstanding, with clear indications of what was misunderstood and how it was misunderstood. Other students tended to gloss over these tensions during interviews.

Figure 1: Stephanie’s Writing Reactions Protocol
Teacher Interviews

Two teacher interviews served to complement student interviews. Again, as the focus of this study is student processing of teacher feedback, I wanted to give students the dominant voice in this study. Teacher interview questions were based on those used in the previous exploratory study (Kramer, 2007). Based on the findings from the previous studies, particularly the teachers' emphasis on how they learned to comment, I not only asked what their commentary philosophy was but where they learned these principles or how they arrived at these conclusions. Also, my definition of what consisted of feedback expanded from just written commentary in the early studies to include grades and oral feedback in this study. Thus, one of my questions was “How do you let students know their progress?” The first interview was designed to provide background on the teacher’s experiences, and give teachers’ room to explore their feedback philosophy. Questions, such as “How has your teaching writing changed or stayed the same over the years? What has seemed to work really well in teaching writing?” targeted teachers’ background and educational experiences with providing feedback.

The second teacher interview was a more reflective follow up on the semester and the students. I followed-up with data from the initial interview and addressed the research question, how does the teacher/student relationship bear on these processes of revision? I ask teachers directly, “How would you describe your relationship with student x (participant)?” I also asked teachers about particular points of feedback in the students’ texts with both teacher participants.

Each of these interviews was digitally recorded and transcribed, and each ran approximately one hour in length. Through my exploratory studies, I discovered that it
often took teachers longer than students to discuss what they wanted to say. Thus, hour long interviews gave teachers the space they needed to delve into issues of response.

Texts

I intended to look at pre-graded drafts of student work in this study as previous research has indicated that graded-drafts with comments have been shown to elicit little attention or revision from students (Goldstein, 2004). However, I learned that the process for essay construction and revision followed a different pattern at this institution, among these classes. Teachers provided comments on graded drafts only because, as Stephan described to me in our interview, students didn’t seem to pay attention to commentary on pre-graded drafts. However, as both teachers encouraged revision of the graded drafts with their comments, it gave me insight into how students use teacher commentary. Because the grade was on the draft with the commentary, the grade can also be interpreted as part of the feedback given to students. Perhaps for this reason, there tended to be a strong grade focus in both classes.

The table below provides counts of marginal and end comments as well as the grade and topic of the essays. It also reveals that often students did not revise the initial graded papers. Each class required three major essays over the course of the semester, though Hoc did not complete the third essay. Stephanie and Candice both told me their revised grades in interviews, while Hoc and John did not know their revised grade, as the teacher was still working on this at the end of the semester when I completed data collection. In counting marginal comments, in-text editing counted, and for this reason, Maggie’s students—John and Hoc—had high comment counts. On average, essays
ranged from 3-5 pages in length, double spaced in 12 pt Times New Roman. All were designed to be persuasive essays, ranging from cause-effect to speech analysis. Again, in the table below, Marginal refers to the number of comments made in the margins, not the word counts. However, “Words end” refers to the number of words the teachers wrote in the final page of the essay as end comments.

In Table 4, it is evident that Stephan and Maggie had different commenting strategies. Stephan commented rarely in the margins compared to Maggie, though it is worth noting that much of Maggie’s marginal commentary was actually in-line textual editing. Stephan averaged about 36 words at the end of most drafts, but for the essays that Candice and Stephanie chose to revise for the portfolio, Stephan gave 50 and 54 words of end comments respectively. This may have helped both Candice and Stephanie with their extensive revision. Maggie averaged slightly more marginal and end comments for Hoc than for John, but she seems to have heavily marked both students’ essays.

I collected students’ graded drafts with teacher comments and students’ revisions, as this provided me with insight into how students are making revision decisions in connection to teacher commentary. Other studies, such as Ferris (1997), have relied heavily on this textual evidence of revision to understand how students interpret teacher feedback. For this study, the texts are important but not the only means of interpreting revision decisions. Revision texts were cross-checked during interviews. This expands on work by Beason (1993), who focused only on the textual revisions. By cross-checking with both interviews and observations, I was able to triangulate the data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie</strong></td>
<td><strong>Essay Title: Cats Are Better Pets</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 2&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 14&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 35&lt;br&gt;Draft 2 # Marginal: 4&lt;br&gt;Draft 2 # Words end: 34&lt;br&gt;Initial Grade: 83&lt;br&gt;Revised Grade: 85</td>
<td><strong>Essay Title: Bullies</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 1&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 12&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 37&lt;br&gt;Grade: 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Essay title: Western Medicine: The Echo of Yoga</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 1&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 15&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 32&lt;br&gt;Grade: 90</td>
<td><strong>Essay Title: New Perspectives on Gardening for Food</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 2&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 8&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 50&lt;br&gt;Grade: 90&lt;br&gt;Revised Grade: 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hoc</strong></td>
<td><strong>Essay title: A Wind of Change on Vietnam War</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 3&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 31&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 66&lt;br&gt;Draft 2 # Marginal: 69&lt;br&gt;Draft 2 # Words end: 25&lt;br&gt;Grade: 75</td>
<td><strong>Essay Title: Why did the Mayan civilization collapse</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 2&lt;br&gt;# Marginal comments: 69&lt;br&gt;# Words at the end: 54&lt;br&gt;Grade: 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John</strong></td>
<td><strong>Essay title: From the Top, Looking Downward</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 2&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 34&lt;br&gt;# Words at the end: 46&lt;br&gt;Grade: 89</td>
<td><strong>Essay Title: Virtual Training, Real Results</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafts: 2&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Marginal: 57&lt;br&gt;Draft 1 # Words end: 70&lt;br&gt;Grade: 83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were initially coded for points of emerging interest. Data was re-coded using descriptive terms to represent larger categories of interest across cases, and codes with examples were assembled onto a separate document. From these codes, examples were cross-checked, and more examples added to the existing codes. Initial codes included Grades, Praise, Repetition, End comments, Meta-cognition, Ignoring and Appropriation. Texts were analyzed using context-sensitive textual analysis (Huckin, 1999), and findings were traced across interviews, texts and observations. Context-sensitive textual analysis acknowledges multiple meanings for texts, but limits the range of possible meanings. As Huckin (1999) explains, “Although texts are usually open to multiple interpretations, the number of plausible interpretations is constrained by various linguistic conventions that are manifested in the text” (p. 86). Therefore, it is the context that helps inform the researcher of the text’s intended meaning. This fit well with my emphasis on context and a sociocultural framework for understanding feedback. Also following this style of textual analysis, I followed representative patterns that reappeared across cases. Then, I recursively examined these patterns for features that contributed to the patterns. I also read these students’ texts with the understanding that they intended to communicate primarily with the teacher, but also with peers. Fundamentally, these texts were not self-expression, but these “writers [of class assignments] try to use language in ways that will be recognized and understood” (Huckin, 1999, p. 87). Thus, these texts were examined for their communicative purposes.
Profiles of Participants

The six participants in this study are each unique and much of their educational, writing and language experience impacted the feedback dialogic discussed in later chapters of this dissertation. I begin by introducing them each here, and try to express with their own words taken from interviews how they see writing and revision, and what role they believe teacher feedback plays in this process. I first bring attention to Maggie and her two students, John and Hoc. I follow by describing Stephan and his two students, Candice and Stephanie.

Maggie

Maggie is a tenured professor of English 102 who was formerly a high school teacher. Maggie’s relationship with her students is a close one. She knew each of the students by the middle of the semester, and from my observations in class, it was apparent that students felt free to ask Maggie about her comments to clarify understanding. Part of the reason she knew each student and the student’s writing was that students turned in 1-2 assignments per class period. Maggie graded and commented on each homework assignment, and had returned much work to students even before the first major essay. She felt that this response helped build students’ self-esteem, and helped them feel as though someone cared enough to read their work.

Everything in Maggie’s class is graded because, as she comments, “If it doesn’t have a grade it doesn’t mean anything to them [students].” She felt that students would not read comments without a grade. To provide comments to accompany the grade,
Maggie notes that “I just mark as I read.” She believes that a thorough approach helps students see their mistakes so they can learn from them. In fact, she commented that later assignments in the semester were faster to mark because students made fewer errors. Repeating comments to students “irritates” Maggie, but she doesn’t feel that she repeats her comments very often. When asked if students ever feel overwhelmed by her commenting, Maggie assured me that she gave students the option to get feedback, and that most wanted it. Further, she said, “They seem to read everything [all the comments].” Maggie encourages revision, but makes sure that students turn in the originally graded draft with the new draft so that she can compare the two. She looks for “substance” in changes.

Maggie’s approach to giving feedback is time consuming—it took her approximately 12-15 hours to give comments and grades to 1 class of 25 students for 1 essay in the 102 class. She takes extra time with the English 102 class because she feels it is their last chance for writing instruction in college. As she says, “I want them to know that I’m reading every little thing.” She has only used this approach in college because high school students didn’t seem to care and there just wasn’t enough time for her as a teacher to do the responding.

John

John feels that his “verbal knowledge” is important to doing well in English, and by well, he means getting As or Bs. He participates often in class and actively asks Maggie questions about his papers. John comments that he finds writing easy, and that “It’s always been something I’ve been good at since I was a kid.” Maggie describes
John: "John is bright and very verbal." She also makes the assessment that "He's a good writer" with difficulties mostly in "grammar, punctuation." This matches John’s perceptions of himself as a writer. In particular, John credits his stepdad with helping him develop strong study skills to check over his work and make sure it is accurate. In high school, John took AP English and found it was "just as easy" as previous English courses. However, there wasn’t an opportunity for revision in high school. In English 101, John struggled a bit to read the instructor’s handwriting and stay on top of assignments, but he seems to be "staying on top of [his] game" in English 102.

As for Maggie’s commentary, John notes that she is very “thorough”. He doesn’t mind the heavy commentary, as it helps him “know exactly what is wrong in the paper” and feeds his perfectionist tendencies. When he revises, he goes through his essay “page by page and see[s] what she’s [Maggie’s] talking about.” This meticulous comment-by-comment approach leaves little room for more global revision, but it addresses Maggie’s feedback systematically. John has been learning about punctuation over the course of the small assignments in Maggie’s class, and he feels it is making him a better writer.

Grades are very important to John, and he finds not knowing his grade “nerve wracking”. He thought he did “pretty good” on the first essay, on which he scored an 89. However, he chose to revise it because he really wanted a 90. Grades are the first thing John looks at when he gets a paper handed back, and this shapes how he reads the comments on the paper. As John comments to me, “It’s not only me that’s going to be looking at my grades.”
Hoc

Hoc is a second language learner of English, but has been writing essays in Vietnamese since the 3rd grade. However, essays in Vietnam were written in-class, timed, with no chance for revision. Hoc has taken several English classes in the US prior to English 102 that did require revision, but they were not as "hard" as English 102. Yet, he is used to getting some commentary on his essays and writing up to four drafts of a paper. What makes English 102 so difficult according to Hoc is that "I don't know much about English vocabulary, so I have less idea to write." He feels much more confident about his ability to write in Vietnamese.

Hoc is not as new to English as his professor thinks (she perceives that he has only been speaking English for two years). In fact, he has been studying English since the 6th grade, but his English study wasn't about writing, it was about grammar. Hoc even took four English classes at the university in Vietnam before he came to the US, courses designed to prepare him for writing and speaking in English. However, for the first year in the US, Hoc commented that "I couldn't understand what people say."

As for Maggie's commentary, Hoc finds it "kind of strict." This is more commentary than he has been used to on his papers. Hoc remarks, "This is my final draft but I still need to re-write it." Though he claims to understand Maggie's comments on this first paper, he doesn't know what she wants him to do on the second paper he turns in. Hoc says that his grades in English 102 are "kind of low for me," and he prefers to get A's and B's. However, he looks first at the comments and then at the grade on the paper because "the grade won't change," whereas the comments provide him with some room to revise or change. Despite his descriptions of English 102 as "hard" and "strict,"
Hoc still feels he is learning as he comments, “The more writing I have the more I improve in writing.”

**Stephan**

Stephan, another instructor of English 102, is a literature PhD non-tenured staff member. He was a full-time lecturer during the semester of this study, carrying a 5 course load for the semester. His load is typical for the institution, where tenured instructors carry up to 6 courses per semester. Stephan received training in how to respond to student writing during a graduate seminar for new TAs and has been teaching writing for the last seven years. However, this is his first year at this particular institution. Stephan believes in a minimalist approach to providing feedback because, as he mentioned twice in our interviews, he is afraid of overwhelming students. He feels dissatisfied with his commenting practices as sometimes he feels that he is unclear, and he prefers to give oral commentary but due to time, is forced to provide largely written feedback. He gives hand-written comments as many students do not have computer access (many students live in rural and isolated communities). Stephan tends to focus on one or two issues so that students can focus their revision, and tries to stay away from too much grammar feedback so that students will focus on global revision.

**Candice**

Stephan’s student Candice is a 34 year-old returning, non-traditional student at this two-year open admissions college who recently completed her GED before returning to school. She describes the 15 years in between high school and college: “I got married
and had kids when I was 17... I’ve just been raising my kids and taking care of my kids and working. I worked for a construction company for about four years in their office and that kind of thing.” English is Candice’s first language, and she is a phenomenal organizer. She comments, “I’m constantly writing lists and I have a tendency to categorize everything.” When she goes to the grocery store, Candice’s lists are separated into different food groups. She has some experience with organizing projects on-the-job and gained experience writing memos and letters at the construction company, but her first experience writing and revising essays was in her first semester of first-year writing in English 101. This semester, Candice is carrying a heavy credit load of 18 hours, and is taking two linked courses in English: English 102 (the class observed in this study) and English 150 (a literature based English course.) Stephan calls Candice “mature” and “among the more actively engaged” of his students. However, Candice repeatedly stated that she was not a writing major, and that she believes it is impossible to get an A+ on an essay. Further, she commented that she needed strong academic incentive to revise, and that she would not revise “just for the fun of it.”

**Stephanie**

Stephan’s student Stephanie is a 34 year-old mother of two. She is supported by her husband and has been able to focus on school this year, and taking 12 credits, without working at another job. Stephanie describes her return to school this year after a long absence: “I graduated in 95 and then basically I’ve just been working and I got a grant so I’m able to better myself and you know actually get a career, so it’s nice. I would like to do something in the writing field or the art field.” In another of our conversations,
Stephanie explains that she’ll probably go into nursing despite feeling drawn to art and writing. She feels that art would not give her the financial stability that she seeks.

Stephanie likes to write and sees herself as a better communicator through writing rather than speaking. She prefers writing such as letters or poems rather than essays. She has always gotten ‘A’s on her essays and so has never before “had to” revise an essay.

**Limitations**

Due to the small number of participants, it is difficult to generalize findings. However, the diversity of the sample increases the robust description of student processes. For these individual students, then, we can see a clear picture of what comments, where and when, helped them to make substantial revisions.

As this study is qualitative, it is not designed to measure students’ internal processes or count instances of student learning. Instead, the rich description of the qualitative study provides a narrative of how students may learn in a particular social context, and how their internal processes may blend with social action to lead to textual revisions. I assert that the terminology generated from these narratives may help teachers better identify and describe ways in which students learn from feedback. This in turn helps teachers determine what conditions and comments promote student learning.

The focus of this study is student learning from teacher commentary and revision. Though I was able to include individual factors such as educational and language experience and how this impacted students’ revision processes, other factors such as age or gender were not addressed in this study. These may be avenues for fruitful future inquiry, particularly examining how gender, age and the teacher/student relationship may
influence students' negotiation of challenging feedback (see Chapter IV for a discussion of feedback negotiations.)

Also, in focusing on teacher feedback, I did not include all of the other resources such as peers, parents, roommates, internet, etc. providing feedback to the students. Future studies could account for ways these different individuals and tools supported students' revision and learning.

Finally, not all students revised all papers, and not all students were able to talk to me in interviews immediately after revising due to scheduling conflicts such as spring break, week-end work schedules, etc. This limited the students' ability to discuss their internal processes that led to textual action, and limited the discussions of revision that I had with students in general. However, stimulated recall measures such as having the texts in front of students and asking students to complete a writing reactions protocol mitigated to some degree these limitations.

In this next chapter, Chapter III, I integrate both the data collected from this qualitative study and the theoretical framework of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy to discuss how students in the first-year writing classroom make decisions about and process both teacher comments and revision.
CHAPTER III

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO LEARNING: HOW STUDENTS USE TEACHER FEEDBACK

Teacher written commentary and student revision provides a rich context for examining student understanding and student learning. I argue in this chapter that understanding how the student uses teacher feedback to develop as a writer is a neglected area in the research on response. Exploring students' operationalizing of teacher comments flushes out the dialogic process embedded in response. Thus, it is more important to know how students interact with comments than to know how teachers rhetorically shape their responses. Further, this research is focused primarily on how students understand and how they make substantive changes (rather than more grammatical or mechanical changes—see Bitchener and Ferris for a 2011 overview of error correction research). The students' uptake, or student understanding/knowledge of why feedback is given and how to use it in revision, is the key to providing conditions which optimize students learning. As this chapter illustrates, students may be grappling with the teacher's comment, striving to understand it and need repetition (both across and within essays), praise and evaluative grades to facilitate their understanding.

Despite the potency of repetition, praise and evaluation in helping students learn, intervening factors such as language or educational experience can also impact students' understanding of teacher comments. This is why I argue against a focus on the form of
the comments, or on the teacher’s intent. Instead, this chapter aims to describe how students interpret and use comments to build their overall understanding and learning. Unpacking these factors untangles some of the complexity of the feedback dialogic so that teachers and researchers can focus their efforts on describing and providing factors that lead to learning. In this chapter, I first revisit the terms REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and CREATE as discussed in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

I then proceed to discuss three findings of factors that impacted student understanding in the feedback and revision process: repetition, praise and evaluation. I conclude with implications for both pedagogy and research.

**Revisiting Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy: Remember, Understand and Create**

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) describes six cognitive operations: REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, SYNTHESIZE AND CREATE. The distinction between REMEMBER and UNDERSTAND is what differentiates between students learning and students copying teachers’ directions. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on students’ moving from REMEMBER to UNDERSTAND. Also, students’ moves to enact learning in terms of revision are best represented by the term CREATE. Thus, REMEMBER, UNDERSTAND and CREATE are the three of the cognitive operations focused on in this chapter discussion.

In terms of feedback, first students REMEMBER or recognize that there is a problem in the essay. Secondly, students develop UNDERSTANDING of why that problem is marked in their writing. Finally, students CREATE a revision through the substeps of “generating, planning and producing” text. CREATION also provides a framework for the notions of
discovery and strategizing that are inherent in the earliest descriptions of the composing process in composition literature (Murray, 1972), and that are important in other robust models of composing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). UNDERSTANDING, however, is the tipping point where students move from an automated revision strategy towards actual learning.

UNDERSTANDING is starkly different from students REMEMBERING a comment they have seen before and immediately acting on the comment with a revision strategy they already know (Anderson & Krathwhol, 2001). In fact, Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) distinguish between an automated response of REMEMBERING and the deeper UNDERSTANDING accompanying learning. REMEMBERING often leads to “executing” or doing the revision. It uses a “familiar” or “routine” revision strategy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 77). Thus, when Stephanie executes her revision to rephrase, she is automatically supplying a common revision that she has experience producing before. It is clear that she often rephrases even when that is not what the comment is asking. For example, in her first essay, her teacher underlines part of her thesis and writes, “what’s the question? Expand.” Stephanie applied the revision strategy rephrase, automatically assimilating his request as a request to rephrase (a comment he makes elsewhere in the essay). In our interview, Stephanie describes her approach, “and he [Stephan] said here, ‘what’s the question, expand’, so um there wasn’t really a question so I just kind of rephrased it.” Stephanie is executing a revision that she knows well rather than UNDERSTANDING a more appropriate revision strategy to expand the thesis.

UNDERSTANDING leads to long-term learning because in UNDERSTANDING, students know why the feedback was given and where to apply what type of revision. Therefore, students can make these revisions not only within the essay, but on future
papers or projects. "Students are said to understand when they are able to construct meaning from instructional messages" (Mayer, 2002, p. 228). Here in this study, the instructional messages are the teacher's comments. The feedback that the students UNDERSTOOD led to substantial revisions, often throughout the text in places where the teacher had not marked. The students were able to derive or abstract a general concept from the feedback that built their overall understanding of writing. This is most closely tied to a sub-category of understanding called INFERRING (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

UNDERSTANDING is a necessary precursor to revision or CREATION. CREATION is composed of the sub-steps of generating, planning and producing (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 86-88). What CREATION acknowledges, more than Williams’ 2004 model, is the complex process of producing text. Revision is both an action and embedded in thought processes of discovery and strategizing organization. This recognizes revision as a much more complex process than the model that discusses revision as “operate” (Williams, 2004). “Operate” suggests that students can just act automatically in their revisions without pre-planning their approaches. CREATION, however, is the most complex of cognitive operations discussed in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). If, as in the cases of these students, creation is apparent in texts, then UNDERSTANDING is underpinning the act of CREATION. Thus, CREATION provides evidence of UNDERSTANDING.

Factors for Student Understanding and Learning

Students' UNDERSTANDING of teacher feedback occurs in a variety of contexts, under a variety of conditions. However, three findings of important factors impacting
student understanding emerged from the data in this dissertation after triangulation and transcript/text coding. Repeating comments, both across and within essays, helped increase students’ understanding of teacher feedback. Also, teacher praise seemed to elicit strong revisions and understanding in students. Finally, teacher evaluation in one instance supported learning and understanding while in the other, seemed to pose a detriment to student development. These three categories of findings are discussed in the sections below.

Repetition Builds Student Understanding

Due to the repetition of comments (both across and within essays), students were able to **infer** meaning by “finding a pattern within a series of examples or instances” (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 73). **Infer** is a subcategory of **understanding**. The teachers gave students multiple instances where they needed to revise a particular issue, like Stephanie’s transitions or John’s citations. Students were able to first **remember** (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) that they had seen the comment before. Then, they connected the meaning of these comments across multiple instances and began to recognize meaningful patterns. They **inferred** from the sections where comments were written what the teacher meant to have them change. As Stephanie recalls in our final interview, “…it was helpful seeing the same comments over and over again because then you know what you really need to focus on.” For all but one of the students, this **inferring** seemed to lead to **understanding**. Hoc’s reaction in our third interview—“I can’t understand what she still needs me to do”—shows that he is aware of the repeating comments by his use of the word “still.” However, even though noticed the repetition, he
was not able to UNDERSTAND the comment. Hoc’s case reminds teachers that repetition alone is not a fail-safe strategy of commenting. Student revising using teacher feedback is a complex interaction of repetition plus educational training and language facility that lead to UNDERSTANDING. Hoc had the least language proficiency and the least writing-focused education out of the group. These contributing factors limited his revisions and classroom success. In the following sections, I first describe how repetition across essays seemed to increase student UNDERSTANDING and learning, as in the cases of John and Stephanie. Secondly, I describe how repeating comments even within one essay elicited student UNDERSTANDING and learning as in the cases of Candice and Stephanie. Finally, I offer a description of Hoc’s misunderstanding repeating teacher commentary to illustrate how important context is in determining what comments lead to student learning.

**John learns MLA citation: Repetition and understanding across essays**

On his first paper, John writes, “Loeb even goes as far as to declare martial law in Memphis and employs 4000 national guardsmen for patrol (Web).” Here, he demonstrates that he is aware that this detail of 4000 national guardsmen needs to be cited in some way, but he is not sure how to do it. Throughout this first graded draft of his first essay, “From the Top, Looking Downward,” John uses “(Web)” to cite facts and figures. Interestingly, he uses page numbers when he includes quoted citations.

Maggie marks two places where John cited with “(Web)” on his first graded draft. First, she circles “(Web)” and writes “No—use word alphabetized by.” The writing reactions protocol, which asked students to write brief comments next to their teacher’s comments in the margins, helped shed light on John’s understanding of Maggie’s
comments. John writes next to Maggie’s comment “not sure what you mean.” At the bottom of the same page, Maggie again circles “(Web)” but this time writes “No—which source.” John seems not to notice her second marking of “(Web).”

John seems to recognize that something is wrong with his use of “(Web),” so in his revision to the first paper, he includes the URL. John writes, “Loeb even goes as far as to declare martial law in Memphis and employs 4000 national guardsmen for patrol (afscme.org, Stanford.edu).” John seems to recognize that he should change all of his uses of “(Web),” and so changes all of these to the URL, even examples not marked by Maggie. However, John’s revision does not follow MLA guidelines. All he understood from Maggie’s comment was “no”.

John gets no feedback from Maggie on his first essay revision before he turns in the second essay, titled “Virtual Training, Real Results.” In this essay, he uses more direct quotes from his research, and implements his new strategy of using the URL. John writes, “Notably, Higinbotham is credited with sparking the video game industry that “…would account for $9.5 billion in sales in 2006 and 2007 in the U.S. alone”(bnl.gov, 1). Here, John uses the page number, which he did for direct quotes in his first essay, and also includes the URL.

Maggie circles this citation again and writes “No—always use word you alpha. by—(Brookhaven).” Here she repeats her first comment and adds an example. Later on in the same paragraph she circles another URL and writes (ESA) in the margins to show John how to cite his sources by name. John slowly starts to understand Maggie’s comment, as evidenced by his writing reaction protocol. John writes next to “(Brookhaven),” “No sites, only actual names.” Here, he demonstrates that he
UNDERSTANDS that Maggie wants to see a specific name of a person or group. However, only one page later in the essay, Maggie again circles the URL “(usatoday.com)” and writes “Craven” above it. John seems to have not made the connection, as he writes in his writing reactions protocol, “Who’s Craven?” This shows that John is developing UNDERSTANDING of citations, and even with repetition, he is still not sure of the revision. From our interview, John noticed, “It was like the same comment exactly.” However, his metacognitive awareness and UNDERSTANDING was not completely developed.

By the end of our third interview, John seems to grasp the concept and begins generating solutions for this problem. He enters the CREATIVE stage of his thought operations with great focus and metawareness revealed in the conversation below.

J: Here again with the ah citations, she crossed out the superfluous contextual information again. It’s kind of just a repeating, repeating mistakes that I ah have in this-this essay.

B: Yeah, you’re noticing repeating stuff

J: Yeah.

B: So that’s

J: Yeah, and that’s the stuff I really try to work on

B: uh huh.

J: Cause that’s what she told us in the beginning when she looks at our work she’s revised, she tells us what we could do to make it better. In our next assignment she sees if we adapted to the problem and corrected it and stuff like that.
Thus, the instructor has directed students to **remember** and **understand**, and even encourages them to **create** or "correct" the problems in their papers. This overt encouragement may have helped John’s cognitive operations. Also, the fact that John can “infer” a general principle of revision built his **understanding**. He then focuses on “really try[s] to work on” parts where he sees repeating comments.

In our fourth interview, John’s **understanding** has solidified. He comments “both formats I did it in were incorrect so that let me know the way I was doing it was wrong, both ways, and then she gave an example on the side.” In John’s revision of essay two, he includes “(Brookhaven 1)” and “(ESA 1)” as well as “(Craven 1).” He also is able to employ this strategy in his third and final essay for the portfolio, as he writes “(Guisepi 1).” John learns that he needs the names, not the URLs or Web in citing sources in MLA format, and he is able to apply this strategy even in subsequent essays. Though the teacher had discussed MLA citation in class and John had access to full examples of MLA citation, he needed the additional support of Maggie’s marginal comments both within and across his essays to learn how to cite in MLA.

**Stephanie learns to make transitions: Repetition and understanding across essays**

In Stephanie’s first essay, “Cats are Better Pets for Busy People,” Stephanie marks her second page, first paragraph and writes “use transition phrases.” Stephanie, despite her assertions that she used all the comments, notices in our first interview that she didn’t use this transition statement. She comments, “I don’t know what that says...use something phrases...I don’t know. I don’t think I did that one here.” Perhaps the
handwriting or Stephanie's unfamiliarity with "transition" impeded her remembering of this comment initially.

Stephanie does REMEMBER Stephan's repeating comments when reading the comments on her second paper. Stephanie remarked in the second interview, "And I guess I have a problem with transition 'cause he's putting this transition again." In Stephanie's comment, "again" signals that Stephanie is making connections between comments written on her first and second papers. She recalled from our first interview that Stephan wrote transition. However, as she did not revise her second paper, it is difficult to see her learning and development.

By her third paper, Stephanie seems to not only REMEMBER that Stephan has marked her transitions, but she UNDERSTANDS and CREATES a revision. In our fourth interview, she describes a place where Stephan marked transition and where she implemented a revision. She connected the ending and beginnings of paragraphs:

S: On page four to page 5, it says there can be side effects with the use of medical marijuana. For this reason, some conditions should be put into place

B: mm

S: That's where he'd said I needed a smoother transition.

B: uh huh.

S: And then I put the next following paragraph is stipulations regulating the use of medical marijuana are important.

B: okay.

S: So I'm kind of leading you into what to expect in the next paragraph.
In this transcript excerpt, Stephanie focuses on Stephan’s comment to transition. She comments that on pages four and five Stephan asked for a smoother transition. Stephanie “put the next following paragraph is stipulations regulating the use of medical marijuana” connecting the words “conditions” and “stipulations” to strengthen her transition. Stephanie not only REMEMBERS the repeating comment to transition from her first and second essays, but UNDERSTANDS transition and is able to give me an example in our interview of how she CREATED a revision.

In our fourth interview, Stephanie reflected on her new UNDERSTANDING of transitions. “That was one thing I noticed like on all of my papers, that he put ‘needs transition.’ So in my final paper, I tried to move smoothly from one paragraph to another so I would kind of incorporate what was coming in the next paragraph, in the end of the last paragraph.” Stephanie demonstrates here that not only was she aware of the repeating “transition” comment, but she UNDERSTANDS what “transition” means. This UNDERSTANDING developed over the course of the semester, and resulted in a strong revision strategy that was considered successful by Stephan. Stephanie learned to transition in her final essay of the semester.

John and Stephanie’s cases illustrate that learning takes time and repetition of comments over the course of the semester. Both were able to successfully CREATE a revision of their final essays. This suggests that teachers should be patient in their reiteration of comments to a student, and this raises awareness that students are not necessarily ‘lazy,’ they simply need multiple instances to INFER or UNDERSTAND the concept. The implication of repetition is that though it seems like students aren’t
listening, they may be listening on a subconscious level that takes several tries to surface to conscious action.

Little work has examined repetition of teacher comments. One notable example is Hyland (1998). In her case studies, she reveals how frustrated the teacher became when writing the same comment over and over. My findings show that both Stephanie and John exhibit much more investment and attention to their teacher’s comments than Hyland’s cases (1998). However, they both seemed to need repetition of comments over the course of the semester to learn from the comments. This finding complicates the 1:1 expectation of teacher comment, student revise. In fact, students may be able to revise after INFERRING the meaning of the comment from multiple examples, necessitating teacher patience in providing multiple examples across multiple essays.

**Candice Adds Support: Repetition and Understanding Within One Essay**

Identifying patterns or INFERRING—a subcategory of UNDERSTANDING—is one way that students can develop an awareness of overarching concepts in their classrooms. In this study of writing and revision, it is evident that students were able to INFER both across and within essays. The learning described above in John’s and Stephanie’s cases took place over the course of the semester. More immediate learning appeared in Candice and Stephanie’s revisions of their final essays. They REMEMBERED, UNDERSTOOD and responded to repeating comments within the first graded draft of their essays. These repeating comments helped both Candice and Stephanie make substantial, global revisions or new CREATIONS of their essays.
Candice was a perceptive student who only needed slight nudging in commentary to trigger her revision. She not only understood the comments in a local way, but assessed what the comments meant to the “overall” success of the essay. For example, though Stephan made several comments asking for more information in her introduction, Candice addressed these comments later in the paper, and even trimmed the introduction down because, as she said, she noticed too many details in it. She commented in our second interview that “his [Stephan’s] comments got me to thinking how much detail should be in the introductory paragraph.” Consequently, though Stephan did not directly tell Candice to shorten the introduction, his comments triggered her cognitive operation and indirectly led to her revision. Perhaps this skill with reading and interpreting commentary increased Candice’s ability to infer patterns of commentary within her essay.

Stephan repeated similar comments to Candice in the margins and at the end of her essay. Candice was able to connect the specific marginal questions that Stephan made to his more general or global end comments. In her first graded draft of her second essay, “New Perspectives on Gardening for Food,” Candice remembered that several marginal comments Stephan made encouraged her to add detail. He frequently raised questions about particular issues such as safety, commenting “how big a problem is safety?” or underlined and asked what types of vegetables were grown by home gardeners with the comment “what are they?” Candice perceived Stephan’s request for adding more detail as corresponding to his end comment, “It feels a little on the short side and leaves me wanting a bit more.” Candice revised the essay for her final portfolio, and her additions lengthened the paper. The essay increased from three pages to five pages.
In our second interview, she explained how she treated Stephan’s comments as a general request for more information throughout the paper, and even added information where he hadn’t requested it:

C: I added um, another citation, another quote and citation.
B: mm hmm. On p.2
C: yeah.
B: second paragraph.
C: mm hmm.
B: And he didn’t call for those things. You did those things.
C: yeah. It kind of—it’s indirectly related to what he said, you know.
B: how so,
C: because for one thing he’s saying it’s short.

In this interview excerpt, Candice discusses how she added another quote and citation to support her argument even though there was no direct marginal comment asking for more evidence. Candice refers to Stephan’s end comment, noting “he’s saying it’s short.” Stephan’s end comment, “It feels a little on the short side” really resonates with Candice, and she keeps it in mind as she revises her paper. To add length, she decides to include more details. In her first draft, she writes, “People who grow their own produce often possess different eating habits than a typical supermarket shopper and are much more mindful of what they eat. Most home growers eat vegetables when they are fresh and in season, meaning they eat what is growing in the garden at a given time.”
Stephan prompts her to revise this section as he writes a question responding to her content. However, he does not say outright ‘you need more details.’ Stephan elicits attention to detail with a content-based comment: “Is this because of growing or because they pay attention to food.”

Candice UNDERSTANDS that Stephan is asking for more detail by INFERRING from both his end and marginal comments. She writes in her revision, “A farmer and popular blogger, calling herself “Matronofhusbandry” refers to her home garden lifestyle as the “zero mile food shed” and describes how her family consumes fresh vegetables almost year round. Many like-minded people tout the freshness and flavor of their garden produce and claim they are healthier than the average consumer.”

In this revision, Candice moves from general “people” to specific “Matronofhusbandry” and includes that this person eats fresh vegetables year round. This gives specific evidence to the more general claim that she makes at the end of this passage: “Many like-minded people tout the freshness and flavor of their garden produce and claim they are healthier than the average consumer.” This is one example of the global revision CREATION that Candice did throughout the paper.

Candice’s UNDERSTANDING is sophisticated; she perceives how marginal and end comments compliment one another. Curious about how she came to this overall strategy of comment interpretation and revision, I asked Candice why she connected the comments throughout the essay.

B: Do you see any benefits to treating it that way as opposed to treating it like if you just looked at the location that it was at?
C: Ah, well I think it makes it, I'm hoping it made it overall a better paper.

Here, Candice describes that she is looking to an “overall” improvement of her essay. It is clear from her revision that she both invested much time in global revision and addressed several places that Stephan did not comment on. Candice was able to interpret and understand Stephan’s comments in an “overall” context that enhanced her revisions both at the locations where he had commented and throughout the entire essay. From our third interview, she noted that adding detail was one area where she had learned to improve. Candice’s new skill also was reflected in Stephan’s final grade for the essay: 95%. Her original score was a 90, thus her grade rose by five percentage points.

**Stephanie Changes Support: Repetition and Understanding Within One Essay**

Stephanie, like Candice, was able to infer connections between comments within one essay. In her revision for her final portfolio, Stephanie notices an almost identical comment in the margins and at the end of the essay. Unlike her first paper, where she seemed to mostly ignore the end comments, Stephanie pays particular attention to Stephan’s end comment on this third essay: “Relate your personal experience back to the bigger picture.” Stephanie writes in her writing reaction protocol next to the end comments, “Beth, I did a major rewrite of this, eliminated some things (ideas) and added more evidence to prove my point. Big revision. Added additional source. Revision took as long as writing my original paper. I’m using this for my final.” In this note to me, Stephanie describes that she changed and added “evidence,” heeding Stephan’s call for support. Further, Stephanie demonstrates that this “big revision” extended beyond
particular marginal comments Stephan made and influenced her “overhaul” of the whole essay.

Her “major rewrite,” “big revision” or “overhaul” (as Stephanie puts it in our interview) was a big change for Stephanie’s overall revision strategy. On her first essay, she only changed words and phrases at the sentence level. Stephan wrote on her revision of her first paper, “This would require more global revision.” Stephan’s comment likely encouraged Stephanie to change her approach to revision, and appears to have improved her ability to infer meaning from comments within the third essay. She recalls in our fourth interview, “like when I revised my first one I revised it but I didn’t revise it to apparently what he was looking for. I only got a two point difference. On this one [Marijuana Legalization], um, I did a complete overhaul on it. I knew more of what was looked for in a revision…you know more of what is looked for the final paper.”

In this essay “Medical Marijuana Should be Legalized in the United States,” revised for the final portfolio, Stephanie eliminates a lot of her personal experience in her revision, and moves the remaining personal experience to the end of the paper (see Appendix A and B). She comments in our third interview, “I had added more actual evidence from books that I had versus my own personal experience that I had in the first paper [first graded draft].” She also concludes, “I think, like, out of my personal experiences, if you, like, read the original and then read the second one,…I took out, like, half.” Here, Stephanie describes that she “took out, like, half” of her personal experience support and substituted more evidence from books she read. In particular, she kept in mind Stephan’s marginal comment, “use personal anecdotes to complement evidence, not replace it.” This corresponded directly to Stephan’s end comment, “Relate your personal
experience back to the bigger picture.” These “personal” related comments reinforced Stephanie’s UNDERSTANDING of this issue and supported her global CREATION.

Not only does Stephanie INFER or UNDERSTAND Stephan’s comments, she also progresses to the point of CREATION. This is a new essay, where Stephanie’s planning and generating of new ideas reshaped her revision. Stephanie notes that she took a “different direction” in her revision:

S: going in kind of a different direction

B: A different direction.

S: Right.

B: And what made you decide that?

S: um I don’t know, like, when he said there’re two he said to use more evidence vs. my own personal experience.

B: mm hmm.

S: So I kept what I felt was important about my own personal experience. In the first paper I had said how it helped with my creativity which that’s not really a medical benefit whatsoever so I’m, like, that’s just irrelevant. It’s an added benefit but it doesn’t really pertain to the paper as a whole. So I went through and read, you know, what I felt, you know, like, if someone were to read…

B: I see this got cut yeah. The creativity thing. Mm hmm. So he didn’t tell you to cut that

S: No

B: you had just decided
S: Right. Well, he had that, you know, with your own personal—it’s good to use your own personal experience which is at the end of the paper he put just, you know.

B: mm hmm.

S: don’t use it as all—as the basis of the paper.

Stephanie UNDERSTOOD that Stephan thought “it’s good to use your own personal experience” just not “as the basis of the paper.” Stephanie INFERRED that she needed different evidence. In this conversation, she refers to Stephan’s end comment, “he said to use more evidence vs. my own personal experience.” Using her INERENCE, Stephanie was able to cut parts of her personal experience that Stephan hadn’t marked, but that overall, did not contribute to the main focus of the essay, like her focus on creativity. In particular, she explains how the paragraph about her creativity on page four of her first graded draft was cut because it was “irrelevant” and was “not really a medical benefit whatsoever.” Instead, she focused on keeping paragraphs about the medical benefits to her on pages six and seven of her final draft.

Stephanie’s revision was considered successful by Stephan, as her grade rose from an 84 to a 95. Also, in our final interview, Stephan commented about Stephanie, “And you know that was something that I think she—towards the end, she got better. Her last paper I think showed a lot more global revision.” Her teacher verifies that indeed, Stephanie UNDERSTOOD and learned from the comments enacted in her global, substantive revisions.
Hoc Has “Too Much Information:” Repetition and Misunderstanding Within One Essay

Hoc struggled more than the other students in the study, with his grades, with his language for writing and with his understanding of the teacher’s (Maggie’s) comments. He acknowledges in our first interview, “Yeah, I think this is, this is kind of hard for me... Because I am not, ‘cause I don’t know much about English vocabulary... so I have less idea to write.” He felt that generating words was difficult for this class particularly because English was his second language and he didn’t have the vocabulary to express his ideas.

However, his teacher felt that his ideas were okay. She writes in her end comment to his first paper, “your ideas and focus are good, however your organization needs to follow your reader’s perceptions and expectations.” In our second interview, it was clear that Hoc did not understand what was meant by “reader’s perceptions and expectations.” What he did understand was “organization” was a problem. Also, Hoc did not seem to understand what Maggie meant in her end comment. Maggie wrote at the end of Hoe’s essay, “each paragraph should present, prove discuss one idea that relates back to your thesis” (emphasis original). Maggie’s emphasis on “one idea” per paragraph seems to suggest that Hoc has too many ideas within each paragraph and thus needs more paragraphs.

Maggie repeated her comments to Hoc in a one-on-one conference. Maggie asked Hoc to come to her office hours and discuss the first paper with her, which he did just before our first interview. He recalled of the conversation, “Cause she said I need to re-organize my paper...It’s a little bit confused... to her. Too much information.” Here,
Hoc's misunderstanding persisted despite the repetition of the end and oral commentary that Maggie provided.

Hoc may be right that Maggie is commenting that he had too much information in each of his paragraphs, but his inference of the meaning of her oral and written comments does not lead him to keep the information and separate the paragraphs. Instead, he deletes information. He condensed a paragraph on the second and third pages of his first graded draft and lost several sentences that explained his cited material.

In our second interview, the night after he had completed his revision, he told me, "My organization was a little bit confused, but I thought it would be okay...I keep repeating some ideas to make my paper longer." Here, he refers to the idea that his information is repeating, not that he has multiple ideas in each paragraph. This clearly establishes that Hoc misunderstood Maggie.

Maggie's graded response to Hoc's paper further indicates that his revision strategy was unsuccessful. His grade was a 75—barely passing at this institution.

By our third interview, Hoc grasps that he may have misunderstood Maggie. He is frustrated when he states, "I can't understand what she still needs me to do." Hoc does not write the final paper, not because he lacks ideas (he describes in detail his plan for the essay with me in the third interview), but because he has a lot of friends and they asked him to parties. Thus Hoc does notice repetition, but cannot infer a similar meaning to what Maggie intends. This may be due to his lack of writing experience or limitations in his understanding of English. Likely, both contributed to this misunderstanding. Hoc's case illustrates that repetition alone is not enough to promote student learning, but that
individual needs of the student may impact the student’s UNDERSTANDING of comments and overall learning in writing.

End comments serve a particular global function that may support global revisions. Goldstein (2005) writes, “A major strength of end commentary is the ability to be summative, or cumulative, thereby bringing together all of the comments in a way that educates the writer for revision of the paper as well as for future revision” (p. 90). It is this summative nature that seemed to help both Stephanie and Candice get the bigger picture of the revisions needed throughout their drafts. In this way, “...teachers also provide individualized instruction through end comments” (Smith, 1997, p. 258).

However, not all “individualized instruction” works for students. Though Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) argue that “We have found that the ideal solution is a combination of both marginal and endnotes” (p. 198), this combination does not work for all students all the time (as Hoc’s case demonstrates). Instead, teachers need to consider the individual student’s needs as they tailor their commentary to fit the particular context. Perhaps an additional conference after the unsuccessful revision would have clarified Hoc and Maggie’s miscommunication, and given Hoc a clearer idea of how to revise his essays. The feedback he received after his first essay revision seems the most crucial point in his motivation and learning.

Praise Builds Student Understanding

Praise is a second condition that evoked student understanding and creation (revision). Though infrequent in the teachers’ comments, praise helped both Stephanie and Candice add to their arguments and develop revision strategies as writers. Further,
both Stephanie and Candice understood why their teacher wrote the praise, and they made the kinds of additions he hoped for. Thus, praise, in the context of these students, aids in student understanding of teacher comments.

**Stephanie Adds Detail Through Praise**

On the first graded draft of her first essay entitled Cats are Better Pets for Busy People, several of Stephan’s comments asked Stephanie for addition or change. For example, Stephan writes “What’s the question, expand?” next to Stephanie’s thesis statement, and in other places questions her arguments by asking “who must own a pet?” and “Is this open to debate?” In most of these instances, Stephanie ignores the comment or rephrases the text to accommodate the comment. These changes are seen as sentence level revisions by Stephan as he comments on the revision, “There’s some good sentence level revision here, but the essay still needs more attention to the thesis and defining of some of the things that make this debate relevant.” However, in one place Stephanie is able to add more explanation and example: the place where Stephan praises her work.

Stephanie writes in her first graded draft, “the sight of a cat asleep with his face in his food bowl is a sight to see.” Stephan comments in the margin, “explain this—interesting.” Here he is expressing his investment with the content and asking overtly for more development. Stephanie understands Stephan’s comment to mean, in general, add detail. Here, she did not need repeating comments within or across the essay to understand, but was able to respond to this one comment.

Stephanie, in her revision, changes from an abstract statement about all cats to illustrating this assertion with an example of her own cat’s behavior. She adds in her
revision, "I came home once to find my cat Stretch, who was a kitten at the time, asleep with his face in his food bowl. His legs stretched out in all different directions." Though this was a relatively small change, it held much more development than her other changes. In our interview, Stephanie explained her revision, "Right because he put explain this it was interesting so I further expanded on it...you know to kind of give the person a picture. You know you can always, there's a picture I think I've seen on line too of a cat that's just like passed out, you know (laugh)." Stephanie is very conscious not only of adding, but adding for the purpose of illustration. Here, her metacognitive awareness of the reason she revised helps support the argument that she learned from Stephan's comment.

**Candice Adds Detail Through Praise**

Candice was also able UNDERSTAND the general concept of adding detail through Stephan's praise. However, Stephan's comment on her paper is less explicit than the comment he gives Stephanie. Instead of overtly asking Candice to "explain this" Stephan just underlines part of the text of Candice's second paper and comments in the margin "interesting." There is some repetition here, as Candice uses clues from end comments and from her face-to-face conference with Stephan to interpret the comment "interesting." She discusses this in our second interview:

C: I said that ah brandywine tomatoes, a favorite of gardeners, mostly likely will never be found in a major supermarket because it cannot be machine harvested. And he says interesting. And so I explained why that particular type of tomato can't be machine harvested.
B: hmm.
C: I went into detail on that.
B: So he underlined it and said interesting and you interpreted that as a request for more information
C: Well whenever I met with him, I met with him on all of this he said that part of the thing and also there's comments on the back that kind of explain too where he's saying he said that it was interesting to him the whole paper was interesting to him but it felt like it was short.

Here, Candice is INFERRING or “finding a pattern within a series of examples or instances” (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 73). This sub-category of UNDERSTANDING requires students to abstract the main idea from the comments, something Candice seemed very comfortable doing.

On the first graded draft, Candice wrote, “For example, the “Brandywine” variety of tomato is a favorite of gardeners but will likely never be found in a major supermarket but it cannot be machine harvested.” Stephan underlined “machine harvested” and wrote “interesting” in the margin. Candice then added in her revised draft, “In fact, any indeterminate variety of tomato will not be found in the supermarket for this reason, limiting consumer access to about half the varieties of tomatoes that exist.” Here Candice broadens her claim that all vegetables are not available to consumers, and that machine harvesting is an important component in limiting this access. Though the change is small, it strengthens her overall argument by way of providing evidence.
I asked Stephan in his second interview what he intended with the comment “interesting” and he replied that indeed he wanted Candice to expand on her ideas. He reports, “because it seems like at this point there’s more to be said about this notion of machine harvesting vs. other things and how that effects our food production, and it seems to me maybe that’s a way of drawing out her thesis statement a little more.” Candice interpreted the comment the way it seems her instructor intended it.

Like Stephanie, Candice is very metacognitively aware of how Stephan’s comment supported her understanding and learning. She states, “he’s saying this is interesting that encourages me to go in that direction…it’s like positive reinforcement, instead of don’t do this or don’t do that it’s do this and say this.” In fact, Candice claims that this praise is more important than some of the other questions Stephan writes on her paper. She comments in our interview, “the positive reinforcement of saying “okay this is interesting” is a more effective comment than saying “What are they?” “How is this a problem?”” Here, Candice argues that Stephan’s praise, though sparse, was the most helpful in her revising and learning process.

Praise has been examined in research on feedback. It is recommended by both L1 and L2 research (Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Elbow, 1993; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Straub, 2000; White, 2007) and among the studies in both L1 and L2, it is found to be a substantial part of the corpus of responses written to students (Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Straub, 2000). However, in this study, only two marginal comments by Stephan praised students. My findings contrast those of Hyland and Hyland (2001), who report, “Our experience is that teachers frequently use praise and regard it as important in developing writers” (p. 192). Do the teachers in my study not regard praise as important
in developing writers? Why was praise used so infrequently? Was it due to time constraints? The teachers in this study taught 5 or more writing classes of about 25 students, and had a very limited time in which to respond to individual student essays. The second language writing classrooms that Hyland and Hyland (2001) observed are typically capped at 15-20 students and teachers do not often carry as heavy a teaching load as they did in this study.

The cases of Stephanie and Candice illustrate that even a quick comment of praise that engages the students can lead to UNDERSTANDING and CREATION of a strong revision. These quick responses of Stephan’s are similar to findings that teacher praise is often quite short (Smith, 1997; Straub, 2000). However, from these case findings, additional explanation (as Straub 2000 recommends) may be unnecessary for student UNDERSTANDING, revision and learning. Further, students are metacognitively aware of the value praise has in helping them revise.

This study demonstrates that learning from praise is indeed possible, even for beginning writers, even with short comments. Unlike previous studies of feedback, this dissertation unpacks the student reactions to praise. Thus we as a field can move forward from statements like “my comments were meant to” (Straub, 2000, p. 30) towards statements of what comments actually meant to students.

**Grades: Both Understanding and Misunderstanding**

Grades, for Stephanie, seemed to increase her overall UNDERSTANDING of Stephan’s comments and instruction. For Hoc, Maggie’s grading served only to confuse and frustrate him. The data from Stephanie’s case supplies evidence that students can use
grades as a way to increase UNDERSTANDING. However, grades also pose the risk of student misunderstanding. Thus, it is important to consider the context of the grade for the particular student as teachers write evaluative feedback. As discussed in Chapter II, instructors used rubrics, but students mostly focused on the overall grade they received for each essay.

**Stephanie Understands Bs**

Grades, though not often discussed with research on feedback and revision, are an important tool of communication between teacher and student. Grades are often a summative statement of student learning, or lack thereof. In particular, Stephanie notes the connection between grades and learning, “It’s good to have a teacher who’s actually giving you a challenge rather than just giving you an A because then you’re actually learning something...It’s good you know to actually have a challenge, it’s harder but you know, it makes your college time more worthwhile... you’re actually learning.” Stephanie sees grades, particularly the struggle to get an A as a part of the learning process. She seems to identify A as the ultimate goal in school, and appreciates having to work to get this grade.

Stephanie not only pays great attention to her grades, but she attempts to understand why she got the grade Stephan gave her. In our first interview, she displays some disappointment with her initial grade on the first essay because she was used to getting As in all of her previous classes:

B: Mm hmm. And um, can I ask, did you do okay for you? Did you do good for you? On the initial paper?
S: I um (pause)
B: Less than you preferred maybe?
S: Less than I preferred.

Yet, in our interview, it is clear that Stephanie feels hopeful about the revision, and looks forward to a better grade on the essay. She notes proudly that she addressed “all” of Stephan’s comments in her revision.

However, Stephanie did not receive the A on the revision of her first essay that she was hoping for. She moved from an 83 to an 85%. Stephan comments on her revision of the first essay, “There’s some good sentence level revision here, but the essay still needs more attention to the thesis and defining some of the things that make this debate relevant. This would require more global revision.” Stephan clarifies why she received such as small increase in her grade, particularly indicating that “global revision” is the key to greater improvement. In our second interview, Stephanie is clearly disappointed and attributes her failure to get an A due to a tooth removal that occurred at the time of her revising.

Stephanie received a higher B on her second essay, an 87%. Also, she showed signs of UNDERSTANDING what Stephan meant by global revision. She comments in our second interview, “Global revision is um, as a whole, it’s not just fixing the grammar and rewording a couple of sentences. It’s um what he had explained as going in keeping the main idea as, but just basically re-writing it.” This re-writing concept appears to be part of Stephanie’s process of UNDERSTANDING Stephan’s grading, but she does not apply this UNDERSTANDING in the second essay as she did not have “the time.”
In her final paper, Stephanie doubles the amount of time she spent on revision and does get an A from Stephan. Stephanie explains in the conversation excerpted below why she feels she got the desired A:

S: so I was happy that I finally got an A.
B: Yeah. What do you think pushed you up into that A bracket.
S: The amount of revision that I put into it. That I actually you know didn’t make small changes I kinda did a complete overhaul of the paper.

Here, Stephanie reveals that she understood that “global revision” was the key to achieving the grade she desired. Stephanie believed that the substantial revision of her paper pushed her grade on the third paper from an 84 to a 95%, from a B to an A. The change in Stephanie’s grades support her hypothesis that grades reflect her learning. She comments, “And I’m hoping that you know that I am like learning. So if I’m going from you know like an 80 I forget I got an 80 something on the like an 83 on my first paper then I got an 87 it shows hey I improved from the first one. You know and it shows that I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing, so as long as I keep improving, that’s what I’m going for.” For Stephanie, it is a combination of grades and commentary that helps her understand her instructor’s feedback and leads to learning.

**Hoc Misunderstands**

Not all of the students in the study identify grades with learning. Hoc attributes grades to the whim of his instructor and finds them frustrating. Hoc comments, “Actually
I think this professor, she’s kind of strict...cause I see the grades, after all the essays. It’s very low.” Rather than seeing the low grades as a reflection of his performance, Hoc attributes these grades to the professor being “strict.” Hoc’s case provides a striking contrast to Stephanie’s gradual learning from her grades. Hoc changes over the course of the semester from wanting A’s or B’s to accepting in our final interview that he might not pass the course. He seems confused by the grades he receives on his first two essays, and generates a variety of explanations related to the teacher’s disposition to explain these grades. Though both Hoc and Stephanie are initially both disappointed with their grades on the first essay, Stephanie seems to understand what she needs to do to improve, whereas Hoc remains mystified by his instructor’s grading and commentary. Ultimately, Hoc does not seem to learn, but instead refuses to write the final essays for the class.

Hoc got a low C on his first paper in this English 102 class, and he was required to revise the paper. Hoc’s first essay explored ethos, pathos and logos in President Johnson’s 1968 speech about the Vietnam War. Hoc showed strong investment in improving his grade, as he attended Maggie’s office hours to get help and feedback on his work. He spent about an hour with her, and she gave him a combination of written and oral feedback. She provided comments on grammar, punctuation and word choice on the first two pages. She also wrote one more general marginal comment: “persuade his audience to understand the importance of his message.” However, it is Maggie’s end comments where she writes the most substantive comments: “Hoc—your ideas and focus are good. However, your organization needs to follow your reader’s perceptions and expectations. Offer introduction –1-3 paragraphs—which helps your reader understand what issues you are addressing and the background that gets Johnson to his speech.
Then—put your thesis at the end of your introduction—after that, each paragraph should present, prove, discuss one idea that relates back to your thesis.”

From these comments, Hoc underlined organization, and he talked in our second interview about how he felt that he was repeating often in his first draft, and so took out this repeating information in his second draft. He also described how he ordered the paragraphs into ethos, pathos and logos. From analysis of the revision, Hoc does do a better job of keeping to one idea per paragraph. He revises and provides background information on the speech. He told me that he needed to constantly read and re-read the speech carefully as he revised, but that he felt the paper was better by the end of his revision.

Hoc got an overall 75% on his revision. He got a 76% on his structure and organization, the part he had worked on the hardest. Also, his grammar and word choice received Cs. Interestingly, Maggie’s end comment focuses on a different area of improvement than her first draft comments. She writes: “Hoc, your overall focus is fine, but without quoted material from the text of the speech, your reader cannot see the proof of your ideas.” Despite spending several hours revising his paper, Hoc does not see a significant grade increase.

Hoc also received a C on his second essay: a 73%. Here, he seemed to be dropping in his academic performance. In our third interview, Hoc begins to search for explanations to justify his grades. He comments that his grade “depends a little bit on the instructor. Some teachers they are kind of easy to pass and some teachers are strict. I hope she’s a little bit easy for me.” With just a few weeks left in the semester, Hoc was hopeful that his teacher would pass him. He seems to indicate from this quote that it is
up to the teacher—if the teacher is strict or easy—whether he passes. Further, he feels that his professor is “strict.” “Actually I think this professor, she’s kind of strict...cause I see the grades, after all the essays. It’s very low.” Hoc does not understand why he is getting these low grades, and so attributes the low grades to his professor’s demeanor.

By the fourth interview, Hoc commented, “If not [If I don’t pass], I have to take 102 again next semester, I think that’s okay.” At the end of the semester, Hoc decided that he cannot get A’s and B’s in this English class, and that even failing is “okay.” Had he UNDERSTOOD the grades Maggie gave him, perhaps like Stephanie, he would have invested more in revising his work. Instead, he seems not to learn from his grades, and admits defeat.

Implications and Conclusions

Student understanding is a metacognitive awareness of why the teacher marked the essay and what kind of revision is called for. Students who read with understanding show an awareness of their audience’s or reader’s needs that goes beyond their own intentions. Student understanding of teacher feedback gives them the flexibility to determine how best to address the reader’s need in revision, often in different ways than those suggested by the teacher/instructor. Knowing the rationale driving the comment enables students to plan a strategy of revision and then generate and shape new text to fit this purpose. In this way, understanding leads to creation. Though analysis and evaluation are also important parts of the composing process, it is the jump from remembering to understanding that most impacts the creation of students’ essay revisions. For teachers, then, this finding suggests that we need to focus our efforts in
communicating commentary clearly to students and help them to understand the rationales driving the comments. For researchers, this suggests that in order to move to the complex revision/creation level, students must first understand what they are being asked to do. Theories that further describe ways that students come to this understanding will be helpful in further charting student learning in the writing classroom.

In order to better promote understanding in students and give them the flexibility to make revision choices, teachers may repeat comments both within and across essays. The repetition allows for students to infer the content of the comment through multiple instances. The different contexts of each repeating comment show new elements of the comment meaning. In John's case, the repeated citation comment occurred both within and across essays. For John, the first two examples provoked confusion and an incorrect attempt at revision. The numerous examples in his second essay provided both a new context and corrected his previous revision attempt. John came to understand the citation comments and thus none were needed in his third and final essay. Teachers may consider repeating comments not only to re-emphasize the point they are making, but to provide new dimensions of understanding the concept.

Teachers repeating comments also can stimulate knowledge transfer. Repetition in Stephanie’s case built her understanding from the first to third essay, and she moved from barely reading the comment to “use transition phrase” to a fairly astute description of what transitions accomplish in an essay. Also, she was able to point to a case where she used transitions in her revision. Stephanie and John were both able to transfer comments across essays, a skill previously considered quite difficult for any writers. This suggests that particularly with teacher written commentary, knowledge transfer is
possible. Future research may consider studying transfer in the feedback and revision process, as this seems fertile ground for investigating how knowledge is moved from one context to another.

Repeating end and marginal comments may seem unnecessarily repetitive to teachers, but in Stephanie and Candice's cases, the similar end and marginal comments built better student understanding of the comments. Stephanie was able to enact global revision due to the two different locations and functions of the similar comment. The marginal comment gave Stephanie a particular instance where she used too much personal information, while the end comment suggested that she generalize the strategy of substituting research for personal experience throughout the essay. As seen in Appendix A, Stephanie gained both understanding and flexibility to make substantial global revisions due to the connected marginal and end comments. For inexperienced revisers, these similar comments in two different locations within one text scaffold overall writing development. Teachers should consider which comments are most centrally important in the student's revising process, and emphasize these in both the margins and at the end of an essay.

Praise also plays an important though often neglected role in promoting student understanding. The teacher's respect and attention to the content that praise implies may elicit more attention from the student to revising. Praise affirms students' strengths, and helps students build on these strengths. This was particularly important for Stephanie, who tended toward quick revision fixes in her earliest essay. Stephen's praise of her work allowed her to build part of her essay towards the argument that she so desperately lacked, and laid the groundwork for her later global revision and metacognitive
awareness of her writing development. Teachers must consider praise not only a viable but an essential part of providing feedback to students. As represented in this study, the praise was infrequent and quite brief, leaving questions about where additional praise may have supported student writers, particularly struggling writers like Hoc.

A much overlooked part of providing feedback to students is the grades they receive. Particularly in cases like those in this study where the grades accompany the written feedback, grades provide a lens through which students come to understand the teacher’s commentary. For Stephanie, a B implicitly suggested that she increase the degree of her revision to achieve an A. For Hoc, a C- signified that even if he revised, his essay was still not going to be good enough. The contrast between Stephanie’s A and Hoc’s low grades suggests that grades are the elephant in the room with regards to discussions of feedback. Teachers may complain that students place too much emphasis on grades, but this complaint belittles the institutional weight of these marks. More research on grades and how these grades impact students’ reading of teacher feedback is needed so that teachers can use this type of feedback to communicate with students.

In the following chapter, I explore how student negotiation of teacher power in commentary can lead to student agency. Further, I suggest that students who appear to ignore teacher feedback may in fact be making a well-thought out strategic decision.
CHAPTER IV

NEGOTIATING POINTS OF DISSENT

Students often struggle to assert themselves in their writing, particularly when faced with comments from a teacher who, with both experience and institutional power, may be hard to negotiate with. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), Sommers (1982) and many others in both first and second language writing have discussed the importance of helping students take ownership over their own writing.

However, as Reid (1994) cautions, fear of appropriating students’ texts can paralyze teachers of writing. Thus, there is a balance to be had between supporting student development and fostering students’ independence and agency.

Further, there is a concern that even the term appropriation connotes that there is one owner of the text, a rather unidirectional view of a co-created text. Newkirk (1989) asserts, “To a degree, the student owns his or her paper, but the paper is intended for others in the way property isn’t; and so, to a degree, the writing is also owned by its readers” (p. 329). The intentions of the writer mingle with those of the reader; students write and revise essays for teachers as well as for themselves. Thus, a dialogic interpretation of appropriation is necessary to fully encompass the tensions between teacher and student ownership of text.

Agency, as defined by Tanita Saenkhum, is “the capacity to act or not to act contingent upon various conditions” (April 11, 2012, p. 12). This definition demonstrates
that agency is the capacity for both an act, and sometimes a non-action. Even silence can be a demonstration of agency. It is a conscious decision and most importantly, it is a metacognitive process impacted by a variety of social and individual conditions.

Student agency is the other side of the issue of teacher appropriation, yet has been rarely discussed in studies of teacher response and student revision. This chapter argues that at least among these four students in the case study, agency and individualized decision making played a role in resisting teacher appropriation. I particularly found that points where students disagreed with their teachers' feedback provided windows into understanding the process of student agency in action. These points of dissention were the subjects students returned to in the interviews, long after I had moved to other questions. I am struck by how articulately students described the points of tension between themselves and the instructors, and how strategically they asserted their agency in the textual revisions.

Hall (1995) asserts that issues of appropriation are relatively old hat. Hall comments, “Unlike Reid's experience, some of us came to terms with the phenomenon of appropriation much earlier and were able to work out reasonably sound systems for providing responses to our ESL students about their writing” (p. 159). Hall’s assertion, I believe, is a false sense of contentment for both researchers and teachers of writing, in both first and second language writing. Though teachers may feel that they offer responses to student writing that encourage ownership, students may still construe this feedback as appropriative despite the teacher’s good intentions. Thus, it is important to look at the dialogic feedback relationship from the student’s perspective as well as the teacher’s, and uncover how students interpret teachers’ comments.
In this chapter, I argue first that we have most recently neglected this concern of appropriation in our research, dismissing it, like Hall has done, as “old hat.” Second, most of the research on appropriation has underestimated student agency in negotiating appropriation. Finally, the cases of Candice, Stephanie, Hoc and John demonstrate that agency can be both revising and not revising, as revealed by the interviews with the students. In some instances, inaction may be misconstrued as apathy, when in fact it is a choice—perhaps the best choice the student can make under the circumstances.

Relevant Literature on Appropriation and Agency

Much of the literature discussing issues of appropriation and agency focuses on the teacher and how the teacher may appropriate student text. In this section, I first explore research discussing appropriation. I then move to more recent studies of agency to round out this discussion.

Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) argue that teachers appropriate student text through focus on an ‘ideal’, where the teachers’ goals for the text supersede the students’ goals. With blindness towards students’ intended meaning, teachers misunderstand students’ purposes, and misdirect students’ texts to issues the student did not want to include. “Student writers, then, are put into the awkward position of having to accommodate, not only the personal intentions that guide their choice-making, but also the teacher-reader’s expectations about how the assignment should be completed” (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982, p. 158). This complex rhetorical position highlights the power imbalance between the teacher and student, and suggests that a careful, contextual examination of the teacher/student relationship may reveal much about students’ revision
decisions. The result from these tensions between teacher and student may often lead the student to revise according to the teacher’s direction, without integrating the feedback or the revision into the larger argument. These disconnected pieces often form incoherent student writing to the dismay and mystification of both teacher and student.

Though Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) point to the importance of student agency, they are more focused on berating teacher support. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) assert, “The teacher's role, it is supposed, is to tell the writers how to do a better job than they could do alone, thereby in effect appropriating the writers' texts” (emphasis added, p. 158). Here, appropriation is equated with teacher support of any kind, a blanket argument that may obscure ways in which the teacher can help students do better than students could alone.

Many teachers have balked at Brannon and Knoblauch's suggestion that any support could be appropriation. Particularly, Joy Reid (1994) is one second language writing researcher/teacher who refutes Brannon and Knoblauch’s position. She argues that students, particularly L2 students, will have no idea of what is expected of them unless they receive support and guidance from their teachers. Reid encapsulates the challenges faced by L2 writers and teachers that makes this such a potent issue:

In the ESL writing classroom, the teacher is responsible for establishing the classroom discourse community, for providing an atmosphere in which that community of writers can grow, and, especially at the beginning of the class, for providing the necessary scaffolding that will result in students’ opportunities to work together to change—and learn (1994, p. 212).

For L2 writing students, many of whom may be international students or who come from local communities with different linguistic and writing expectations, the college writing classroom offers one avenue towards understanding the larger academic
community. The writing classroom often provides support that L1 students find in other places, such as the larger social community. What Reid highlights here is the concern that we as teachers provide no help at all to students out of fear. Instead, she suggests support in terms of scaffolding, or helping students move from known (prior knowledge) to the new.

Both Reid (1994) and Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) take extreme positions on this issue of student agency and teacher appropriation, and focus on the teacher’s perspective in their discussions. Several researchers in first language writing have hinted at the importance students and student agency plays in the feedback dialogue. Onore (1989) asserts that the dialogue between teacher and student is essential for overcoming appropriation. She states, “Only within a context where an inquiring learner comes together with an inquiring teacher, where both persons negotiate, exchange meanings and share and modify intentions, can empowerment occur” (Onore, 1989, p. 247). Here, “empowerment” suggests student agency. Further, this agency is negotiated through interaction with the teacher. However, Onore does not provide a strong illustration of this type of negotiation, nor does she include the student voices as they negotiate. Greenhalgh (1992) also suggests that student voices need to be brought into this discussion of power and appropriation. She writes, “We need to bring students into the conversation about response by discussing in class their expectations about the teacher’s proper role” (Greenhalgh, 1992, p. 409). However, Greenhalgh does not herself include student voices, and leaves this for future studies.

Two authors do provide more discussion of student negotiation and agency in their work. In Prior (1995) article, he shows that what looks like appropriation can
actually be “internally persuasive” feedback. In other words, the student agrees with the feedback and so imports it into her work wholesale. Tardy (2006) provides a case example of Chatri, a graduate student who at times felt “uneasy with some of the changes” that his ‘more knowledgeable peer’ Roberto suggested when co-writing the paper (p. 68). This dissent was vocalized more as Chatri “became more immersed in disciplinary practice...[it gave him] greater confidence in rejecting feedback that was not internally persuasive” (Tardy, 2006, p. 72). However, she does not describe in detail how the student rejected the feedback.

Student agency is a topic that has been addressed in composition, though not in conjunction with issues of appropriation. Gorzelsky (2009) draws from Gestalt theory to explain how agency impacts student learning: “The learner chooses which new material to integrate and which to discard, as well as which parts of her prior beliefs and values to revise” (p. 68). Gorzelsky sees agency as a conscious decision to accept or reject or revise. Gorzelsky also asserts that students’ perspectives need to be valued and acknowledged by the teacher before change can occur. With feedback, often students interpret comments as challenging rather than acknowledging their perspectives, and they find it difficult to “argue for positions that challenged ideas their instructor had encouraged them to seriously consider” (Gorzelsky, 2009, p. 78). Cooper (2011) also recently discussed agency, focusing on agency as an active process of negotiating responses. Similar to Gorzelsky (2009), Cooper (2011) takes a systems approach to agency, noting that individual decisions are informed by the whole picture or larger context. In defining agency, Cooper calls it “a response to a perturbation that is shaped by the rhetor’s current goals and past experiences” (2011, p. 426). “Perturbation” can
also be dissent, particularly the places where students disagree with teacher feedback. Students' responses to teacher feedback are then shaped by their goals towards particular grades, and their past experiences with their instructors' feedback.

The questions arise: How do students interpret teacher comments and how do they negotiate this feedback to resist appropriation? Where are the student voices in this issue? How does student agency play a role in negotiation of teacher feedback? The cases of Candice, Stephanie, John and Hoc all point to ways that students assert their agency in negotiating teacher feedback.

**Actively Negotiating Commentary Through Revision**

ANALYZING and EVALUATING, two later-stage operations in the cognitive dimension of Bloom's taxonomy, help describe how students make decisions about commentary to both exert agency and resist appropriation. ANALYZING requires students to not only understand the message of the commentary, but to understand the implications underlying the suggestion. In Candice's case, when Stephan encourages her to describe obstacles to gardening in her introduction, she not only determines that he would like more about obstacles throughout the essay, but she realizes that Stephan may have missed her overall focus on health and gardening. Candice attributes, which "involves an extension beyond basic understanding to infer the intention or point of view underlying the presented material" (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p.82). Stephanie, too, ANALYZES when she addresses Stephan's question about whether she is discussing medical marijuana or all marijuana use. Stephanie determines from his comment that she has not been clear enough that her focus is on medical marijuana, rather than assuming Stephan.
wants her to discuss both medical and overall usage. She DIFFERENTIATES the two parts of his question, and focuses on the part of his question addressing medical marijuana. 

ANALYZING requires confidence in one’s own agency to determine the underlying meaning, and to read between the lines for the implications of the commentary. 

ANALYZING may help students resist appropriation as well. If a student is ANALYZING the comment, it is less likely that he/she will make haphazard revisions that simply obey the teacher’s comment, leading the essay in contradictory directions.

In addition to ANALYSIS, EVALUATION impacts students’ agency and resisting of appropriation. John and Hoc weigh the pros and cons of addressing Maggie’s feedback. Hoc determines that making a token revision to appease Maggie is worth the effort, while John determines that ‘ignoring’ or not revising in response to the comment is his best approach. Both John and Hoc CRITIQUE Maggie’s feedback in conversations with me, and in making these judgments, assert their agency to not revise.

Even though Candice, Stephanie and Hoc maintained some agency in their revisions, they also felt compelled to at least slightly accommodate their teacher’s requests. This suggests that, though appropriation is negotiable, it is a powerful force in feedback and revision. In the cases described in this next section, I focus on ways in which the social context impacted students’ cognitive operations. Thus, the emphasis of this chapter is on how students assert agency and resist appropriation, with lesser attention given to the cognitive operations underlying this agency and resisting of appropriation.
Candice: Hedging Revisions

Candice is a confident, high-achieving, motivated student who has a good relationship with the instructor, yet even she feels the tensions of disagreement and appropriation. This finding suggests that even under “ideal” conditions, teacher comments can be construed as appropriative, and thus students need to learn ways to approach these comments with strategic agency. Candice is one student her teacher labels as “motivated,” “mature” and “over-achieving.” Candice and her instructor have a positive relationship, evidenced by their open dialogues and discussions of Candice’s questions. Also, Candice has a very strong sense of ownership over all of her essays, illustrated by her statement in our interview,

And I kinda think in general too like what makes a better paper isn’t like every last little thing he tells me isn’t necessarily going to make it a better paper. If I choose to go in that direction with it, like if I decided to change my thesis based on a comment that he makes that I think is irrelevant then it might be a good paper still but it’s not what I’m going for. (Candice)

Here she describes how “every last little thing he [the teacher] tells me” or addressing each comment Stephan makes, is not necessarily her ticket to success. She maintains agency in this statement by emphasizing her choice, and her opinion that the comments may be irrelevant. However, even in this strong, assertive statement, Candice hedges—“it might be a good paper still.” She acknowledges Stephan’s expertise throughout our interviews, and feels torn between her purposes and focus for the papers and Stephan’s advice. In particular, Candice struggles with appropriative tensions in her final paper.

The only paper that Candice revised was her second essay entitled “New Perspectives on Gardening for Food.” She revised this essay for her final portfolio and
discussed in our interviews how she addressed Stephan’s comments when revising. One issue she returned to frequently in our conversation was Stephan’s comment next to her thesis statement—“what obstacles are there to growing?” Candice retains her original thesis statement in her revision: “Much of this fuss [measures taken to preserve foods] can be avoided in the backyard of a consumer growing most of his or her own food while enjoying the benefits of exercise and mental therapy that is built in to gardening.” This thesis statement reflected the driving purpose of her essay, which was to describe the health benefits of gardening. She was reluctant to make changes to this statement, a reluctance she describes in the following excerpt from our interview: “Well, I kinda didn’t understand why he would say you know like what obstacles are there to growing... Because that’s not health related. This paper is health related. I chose not to really respond to that comment, and I guess I could have, but I felt kind of like it was off subject... maybe he’s kind of missing the point there.” Candice, despite her firm decision not to address this comment directly, still hedges with “I guess I could have.” She offers a justification, commenting that describing obstacles would be “off subject” and that her essay was more “health related.” Finally, she concludes that the instructor, Stephan, may have misunderstood her: “maybe he’s kind of missing the point there.”

In another part of our interview, Candice comments, “I may completely disregard it [a teacher comment], but then look at my paper and see why he’s not understanding where I’m going with it.” She uses some of these “off subject” comments to measure how well the instructor understood her main idea. Candice then used the comments, though not to make the changes that her instructor seemed to be asking for. Candice felt as though her focus was unclear to Stephan, and so added in the phrase “health benefits”
four more times throughout the revision of this paper. She describes this revision, “I just, I think that whenever I went back and did the revision, I tried to make it more clear that it’s about the connection between gardening and health.” Candice exerts her agency in choosing if and how to respond to the teacher’s comments. She particularly shows perceptiveness in noticing the disconnect between her intentions for the paper and her instructor’s understanding of the paper. However, she hedges her assertive statements, still unsure of how to juggle the teacher’s expertise with her own wants and needs as a writer. This echoes Greenhalgh’s (1992) discussion of imbalanced power inherent in the teacher and student relationship.

Further, Candice’s response resonates with Welch’s (1998) statement about how students read teacher commentary: “These readings [of teacher comments] will also strike students as compelling, a reality with which they must contend” (p. 376). Candice contends with the reality that her paper could have followed Stephan’s suggestions more closely, and it “might be a good paper still.” However, she found a revision strategy that she believed served her purpose, to emphasize the connection between gardening and health. Candice made a strong move as a first-year writer that shows that students can assert their agency despite appropriative tension. This is different from Tardy’s (2006) discussion of appropriation, where the student felt appropriation but did nothing to negotiate it in the text. This is also different from Prior’s (1995) discussion of internally persuasive feedback where the student completely embraced the change.

Candice negotiates far more than the novice writers of Sperling and Freedman’s (1987) or Hamp-Lyons’ (2006) studies. However, she was also a mature, non-traditional student. Still, Candice’s case suggests that first-year writers may have the potential to
negotiate appropriative feedback, but require a significant amount of confidence and awareness of teacher fallibility to do so. Candice recognizes the limitations on Stephan’s commentary when she remarks with regards to his comment, “maybe he’s kind of missing the point there.” At another point in our interview, Candice mentions that Stephan has a large paper load, and may be reading through papers very quickly. She seems aware that his commentary is meant as a guideline, not a mandate. This awareness helps her recognize the potential room for negotiation and helps her avoid teacher appropriation of her writing.

Candice is in many ways an ideal student. She is able to generalize commentary across and within essays. However, even this ideal student found commentary to be at times appropriative. Thus, it is essential for teachers to recognize that all students struggle with appropriation of their writing; this is not an issue solely for weaker writers.

**Stephanie: Negotiating Revision**

Stephanie’s case reveals how students can change their perspective on teacher comments over the course of the semester, and gain the confidence needed to negotiate commentary effectively in their writing. Stephanie evolves from a student who seems to have little confidence to resist commentary—she at first emphasizes that she tries to cover all comments in her revision—to a student who has the confidence to question the instructor.

Stephanie is described by Stephan as a motivated but “worried” student. She is not as confident as Candice in her writing abilities, and frequently asks questions in class about Stephan’s feedback to clarify his meaning. Stephanie reports that she has always
liked her writing teachers, and finds all of their feedback helpful. Particularly in our first interview, she told me that she made sure to use "all" of Stephan’s comments.

Revision was new to Stephanie at the beginning of the semester. In high school and even in her first semester of college, Stephanie recalls doing little revision. However, Stephanie does seem aware of differences between high school and college revision: “High school revision was fixing spelling fixing grammar. That was revising it. This [college] is a whole new level of revision, actually rewording restructuring changing some ideas. And I mean it can be a totally different paper at the end.” However, Stephanie’s focus when she revises her first essay, “Cats are Better Pets,” is on addressing each of Stephan’s comments individually rather than looking at the essay as a “totally different paper at the end.” She described her revision process in our interview, as “start[ing] at the beginning, what I first went through and did was the simple grammar, get that done and over with, remove the apostrophes or where the grammar was wrong.” This reflects Stephanie’s high school revision approach, which aimed at revising the grammar and spelling. In this first essay in Stephan’s class, Stephanie restructured some sentences and replaced bullet points with paragraphed prose as well as corrected the grammatical errors underlined.

Stephan gives Stephanie two more percentage points for making these changes, but Stephan comments at the end of her paper, “There’s some good sentence level revision here, but the essay still needs more attention to the thesis and defining some of the things that make this debate relevant. This would require more global revision.” This is an important learning point for Stephanie. She begins to recognize that her high school “grammar” revision approach is insufficient for the grade that she desires, and she makes
reference in our interview to wanting an A. Also in our interview, she commented that Stephan’s feedback helped her see how much revision was required. It helped her know “what was expected” and moved her towards acting on the overarching goal of her paper more than on sentence-level, individual changes.

A potential for appropriation arises in Stephanie’s final portfolio paper on Marijuana when Stephan underlines “medical marijuana” on the second page of her essay and comments, “Do you want full legalization or just medical.” Stephanie seems much more puzzled than Candice about the potential reasons why Stephan seemed to misread her paper. She mentioned three times in quick succession in our third interview that she “thought it [the paper’s thesis] was clear.” She described to me how the title alone should have indicated the focus of her paper: “I thought, too, that made it clearer when the title of the paper is legalize medical marijuana.” Though Stephanie does refer throughout her paper to medical marijuana in context, (see appendix A) Stephan does not pick up on the reference.

Using the writing reactions protocol, Stephanie’s resistance to Stephan’s comment is graphic. Stephanie draws the arrows, and Stephanie writes in a more bubbly script “thought this was clear” in the left margin, surrounding Stephan’s comment with those of her own. Stephanie resists Stephan’s question of medical marijuana, making several arrows back to the parts where she highlights ‘medical marijuana,’ as though responding back to the teacher.

Yet despite this resistance and tension, Stephanie indirectly addresses this comment. Though there is no change to that part of the text, Stephanie tries to emphasize “medical, medical, medical” throughout her paper, to account for Stephan’s question of
government could collect from legalizing and selling marijuana is significant. Legalizing marijuana would also stop the addition of other drugs to marijuana by some drug dealers, this would make it a safer drug for the people who use it. Making marijuana legal would lower its appeal to people for the fact that it is no longer an illegal drug. The positive effects of legalizing marijuana far outweigh the negative effects of using the drug. 

If medical marijuana is legalized, then the use of it should be regulated. 

(Regulating the use of medical marijuana would help establish its safe use.) It should require a prescription. By requiring a prescription, a doctor can determine if it is indeed needed. Another important stipulation of legalization would be that the prescriptions only be valid for people eighteen years and older, just as tobacco is only available to people eighteen years of age and older. One last important aspect of legalizing medical marijuana would be to monitor the individuals that are prescribed it. This way any ill side effects, or health concerns would be attended to immediately. 

The responsible and limited use of marijuana benefited me in the past. I am 14.

Figure 2: Stephanie’s Writing Reactions Protocol

Whether she is discussing marijuana as a whole or just medical marijuana. This may have been what Stephan was ultimately hoping for in her revision, but it left Stephanie feeling overly repetitive. Stephanie’s agency in resisting Stephan’s comment is not as apparent in the revision as it is on the second page of her draft (see Figure 2) where she draws arrows and tries to clarify for (me or Stephan) what she intends using the writing reactions protocol.

Stephanie and Candice both demonstrate assertiveness and negotiation of their teacher’s comments in their revisions. Yet, they still feel that they need to account for the teacher’s comments, and so both make slight revisions to accommodate Stephan. This suggests to teachers that students read our comments very carefully and will often try to
appease us even if we are wrong. Still, Stephanie’s case shows that though students may not begin the semester knowing how to negotiate teacher feedback, they can learn to negotiate through teacher commentary over multiple essays. For teachers, Stephanie’s learning implies that students may be explicitly encouraged to negotiate comments and learn to revise with this negotiation in mind.

However, Hoc and John complicate this picture of negotiation, and through their interviews with me, describe the complex series of decisions they made when responding to their teacher’s feedback. Hoc and John choose not to revise as much as Stephanie and Candice, and this decision could be viewed as ignoring the teacher’s feedback. However, the interviews revealed that both students read the feedback, grappled with understanding it, and ultimately disagreed what Maggie seemed to be asking them to do. Hoc and John choosing not to revise was a type of negotiation, and one that shows connections between misunderstanding and “ignoring” feedback.

**Non-Revision as Agency**

Are students really ignoring teacher feedback? Or is ignoring another form of negotiation? This question arose as I struggled to understand why John and Hoc did little to revise in response to some of Maggie’s comments that they disagreed with. A striking contrast to Candice and Stephanie’s global changes, Hoc changed one sentence on a point he disagreed with, while John chose not to revise at all on the point he disagreed with. Both Hoc and John demonstrated through the interviews that they struggled to understand Maggie’s comments, and due to time constraints and their disagreement, chose silence over revision.
**Hoc: Misunderstanding, Disagreement and Minimal Revision**

Maggie and Hoc experienced a complex writing relationship. Perhaps compounding their miscommunication was Hoc’s limited proficiency with English and Maggie’s feeling even from the beginning of the semester that she probably would not be able to pass Hoc due to his limited language proficiency. She explained to me, “Hoc hasn’t given me enough [writing]. Hoc is a little shy and he has a long way to go. He-But his is language issues. He doesn’t speak English as well as he should to be in 102.”

Here, Maggie expresses that she doesn’t feel that Hoc has the language skills to succeed in this second semester of first-year writing. She feels that since English is his second language, this may be hampering his performance. Maggie is not only candid with me, but she is also quite open about her doubts when talking to Hoc. In our interview, Maggie mentions that she has told Hoc that she is not sure if she can pass him. Even before he received a grade on his first essay, Maggie is forecasting a gap between Hoc’s expectations and her own.

Maggie seemed not sure where to start with Hoc’s first essay. She wrote a fairly long end comment and gave Hoc oral directions for re-organizing his essay. Perhaps due to the large writing course load or due to the number of errors she detected in Hoc’s writing, Maggie only marginally marked the first two pages of Hoc’s essay.

Hoc showed, as described in chapter three, great investment in revising his first essay. He attended Maggie’s office hours and spent two hours revising his essay at home.

Maggie’s feedback on the rubric of Hoc’s revision suggested that he overall earned Cs on all components of his writing, including the organization which he had
invested the most time working on. This may have disappointed Hoc, who by his own admission preferred A’s and B’s.

Hoc seemed much more frustrated and seemed to disagree more with Maggie on her assessment of his second essay. As he considered revising his second essay and discussed it with me, Hoc swung between wanting to make the essay better and feeling Maggie’s comments were not necessary.

Hoc’s essay entitled, “Why did the Mayan civilization collapse,” received the lowest grade of the semester: a 73%. This grade may also have been frustrating for Hoc, who in our first interview, told me “we all want As and Bs.” The assignment was to “state clearly whether you are discussing causes, effects, or both. Introduce your main idea, using the terms “cause” and/or “effect.”” There were three options given for providing researched support for the argument. They were chronological, order of importance and categorical. It seemed that Hoc was attempting to use a categorical form of support to explain the causes and effects. Maggie suggested in her interview that the audience for this and other essays was both the teacher and other students in the class.

In this cause and effect essay, Hoc felt strongly that his thesis was okay, and that he was “right” in writing it. These statements contradicted Maggie and affirmed Hoc’s agency in resisting her feedback. His thesis for this cause and effect essay was “There is still an argument between those two theories; therefore, studying about the collapse of Mayan civilization not only helps us to understand the reasons for the decline of the Mayans but also is a lesson for us to avoid the same fate of the Mayans.” As he explained his essay to me in our third interview, he described how he first explained one of the reasons the Mayan civilization collapsed, then he discussed the other plausible
reason why the Mayan civilization collapsed, and then concluded that both causes led to the effective collapse of the Mayan civilization.

However, Hoc’s approach deviated from Maggie’s expectations for the essay. Maggie questioned whether Hoc’s thesis statement was cause/effect, and in her end comments, notes, “Because this is a cause/effect essay, it is necessary that your paper follow the cause-effect focus both in your thesis and throughout your paper.” Maggie encourages Hoc to connect each body paragraph back to his thesis by commenting “how does this help prove your thesis” and “how does this relate to and prove your thesis?” Throughout Hoc’s essay, Maggie writes questions about how each paragraph proves his thesis.

Hoc is confused by Maggie’s comments and also disagrees with her comments. At several points in our third interview, Hoc brings up his confusion and dissent. In the passage below, he discusses Maggie’s repeating requests to prove his thesis:

H: She still needs me to prove again my thesis

B: Yeah, she’s still asking you to prove your thesis. Pretty much she writes that on every paragraph.

H: Uh, I don’t know why cause, I think because I did the research and

B: Mm hmm.

H: And, I-I got the idea of the research, of the the the research. But

B: mm hmm.

H: But-but when I wrote the essays it’s still a little bit misunderstand for me and the reader.
B: Mmm hmm there's still some gap there.

H: Yeah.

B: I don’t know what it is.

H: For me, when I-- I can’t understand what she still needs me to do

B: Something she needed. Cause you understand.

H: Cause I thought I prove already in my essay.

In this conversation, Hoc explains that his ideas are clear and well-defended to
him. He acknowledges that “it’s still a little bit misunderstand” for Maggie. Though
Maggie has asserted that she and the class are Hoc’s audience, my impression from his
interview was that he saw a much broader and undefined audience for the essay. This
may be one reason he chose not to address Maggie’s concerns directly. Towards the end
of this part of our conversation, he seems to be frustrated and confused when he
comments “I can’t understand what she still needs me to do.” For Hoc, revision is a
problem because the ideas are clear to him and he cannot quite understand Maggie’s
perspective. He acknowledges that he did only a little revision to this essay, largely due
to the fact that he thought he already proved his thesis. Hoc comments “I think this is just
a little [amount of revision].” When I asked why, he responded “Cause I understand my
essay already.” Hoc has a tough time imagining revisions because to him, there was no
problem.

I have included the first and third pages of Hoc’s cause and effect essay to give
readers an understanding of his overall argument and structure of the paper. I have
chosen to include his first graded draft as Maggie's comments are also evident on the draft.

Figure 3: Hoc's first page of essay

Why did the Mayan civilization collapse?

During the history of our world, we have studied many collapses of strong empires from the ancient world before B.C to A.D, such as Mayan in Central America, Khmer in Southeast Asia, Babylonian and Persian in Minor Asia, Roman in Europe, and so on. These empires had a similar feature that they had reached many achievements in their civilization such as astronomy, mathematics, politics, architecture, art, and so on before their civilization collapsed. The collapse of Mayan civilization seems to be a hard topic to explain. Many scientists, including professors, archaeologists, and geographers have been suggesting many hypotheses that led the Mayan civilization to collapse. According to the amount of research, there are two reliable hypotheses to account for the collapse of Mayan civilization. One hypothesis is that a climate or drought, which endured through multiple years. The other hypothesis is plagues, which were introduced by the Spaniards. There is still an argument between those two theories; therefore, studying about the collapse of Mayan civilization not only helps us to understand the reasons for the decline of the Mayans but also is a lesson for us to avoid the same fate of the Mayans.

Mayans, who lived in the period from 300 B.C to 950 A.D (Criss 1), were the most famous ancient race that had many sophisticated technology achievements. Mayan people lived in Central America, the region between Mexico, Guatemala and Belize and we can see their deserted buildings, including pyramids, temples and tombs which still exist in some places in South America (see map 1).
Figure 4: Hoc's third page of essay two

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A.D. (Peterson 8). In another report that also considered in *Climate and the Collapse of Civilization* written by Gerald H. Haug, there were four droughts occurred around 760, 850, and 910 A.D. With those ideas, we can see that both scientists have given the same information for supporting this hypothesis. How does this help prove your thesis?

Mayan economy was based on agriculture. This is a main point that water sources are very necessary for their life and their agriculture. To deal with dry seasons every year, Mayans built numerous of canals and reservoirs. Those hydrological engineering buildings were capable for 10,000 people drink for the duration of 18 months. Although they had many sophisticated hydrological engineering buildings, they still depended on the seasonal rains to replenish their water supplies because they had not discovered the wheel and were without metal tools (Peterson 1). Therefore, finding the underground water sources seemed to be impossible for Mayans.

Further, Gerald H. Haug who earned his Ph.D. at the University of Kiel did a research at Cariaco Basin, off northern Venezuela, reported in the news (Peterson 1).

Haug and his colleagues identified the bands in the sediment cores that correspond to the annual wet and dry seasons” (qtd. in “Intense droughts blamed for Mayan collapse”).

Another result related to the multi-year droughts hypothesis also was found from Lake Chichancanab, in Yucatan, Mexico, a place was the center of Mayan society by a group of researchers from University of Florida had a the same result that there was a long dry season killed the Mayans (“A long dry season killed the Mayans”). They collected the sediments that found in lake Chichancanab believed exist in the Mayan living area. Then, they analyzed the ratio of calcium carbonate to calcium sulphate in sediments and the proportion of heavy to light isotopes of oxygen in buried shells in the lake. Both these measures give a sensitive picture of
Despite resisting Maggie’s feedback, Hoc makes an attempt to negotiate and accommodate Maggie’s requests to prove his thesis. On the third page of his essay, he changes the last sentence of the first paragraph from “With those ideas, we can see that both scientists have given the same information for supporting this hypothesis” to “With the comparison between two scientists research, we can prove that there occurred at least a few droughts during the Mayan period.” His revision is much more specific, and moves from the general “ideas” to “scientists research,” as well as changing the general “hypothesis” to “droughts.” He feels that this better reflects his main idea for the essay. However, this is the only place in the essay where he attempted to negotiate the comment through changing the text. At other places in the text that Maggie marked, Hoc chooses not to revise. However, it is clear from my interview with him that he struggled with both the meaning of her comments and what she wanted him to do, and was not simply ignoring the comments.

Hoc makes a choice to be silent in his revision, not uptaking Maggie’s comments beyond the third page of his essay. As the semester progresses, Hoc seems to choose to be silent altogether, and does not write the third or final essay. When I asked if he just lacked ideas for his essays, he said that he had an idea and even research, it was just that he was busy partying with his friends. However, underlying this excuse seems to be some frustration with Maggie, and a lack of understanding of her feedback.

Finally, in our last interview, Hoc decides that it is okay if he doesn’t pass the class. This is a dramatic change from our first interview, and shows how misunderstandings with Maggie may have led him to believe that silence was his only negotiating tool in this situation.
Hoc’s case is an example of a student disagreeing and not knowing how to express this disagreement in textual revision. Hoc made one attempt to appease Maggie’s requests. However, from the interviews, he made it clear that he disagreed with her comments quite strongly. Often, students who face the power imbalance inherent between teacher and student may come away silenced. This may be a particular problem for those from other cultures who sense an even greater divide between teacher and student. I suggest that teachers consider explaining students’ options to negotiate feedback so that students feel more enabled to take an active role in shaping their revisions. This may entail teachers explicitly telling students early in the semester, “Read through my feedback, and try to focus on the most important issues. Perhaps you won’t use all of my comments.” This may seem scary to some teachers, to allow students to not use all comments, but it would encourage student agency.

Hoc took English 102 at this two-year college perhaps believing that the course would be easier. However, Maggie felt a strong commitment to upholding the standards of the course, and did not believe in passing students who did not meet the criteria for linguistic competence. Though there were other second language writers in the class, Hoc demonstrated the weakest language and writing skills, according to Maggie. Hoc continued to revise his first essay for the end of the semester portfolio, and perhaps due to his final effort, Maggie granted him a D. This meant that the grade would not impact his visa status, but that Hoc would have to re-take the course, a possibility he seemed aware of at the end of the semester. Hoc felt tension when responding to Maggie’s comments, particularly evident in his third and fourth interviews with me. This tension allowed me
to see how he exerted agency in choosing not to respond to her comments as it provoked much discussion as evidenced above.

John: Agency in No Revision

One point of dissent in John’s work is in the third major essay, John’s definition essay entitled “Brain food”. He wrote on the second page, “And as we each grow into adulthood family reliance is minimized and individual worth is emphasized.” Maggie underlines “family reliance is minimized and individual worth is emphasized” and writes “in all countries/cultures.” Here, she seems to question John’s assumption that part of growing up is focusing on the individual. I asked John about this comment during our third interview:

B: What’d she underline here
J: Oh
B: (reading), in all cultures or countries.
J: Yeah.
B: So again, is this the only way to do something
J: Mm hmm. Yeah. I guess I kept it a little more subjective
B: Mm hmm
J: Cause I was you know I’m writing a paper for the students in my class I mean one of our students I guess is an exchange student but the rest of them you know, that’s kind of the American way.
B: hmm okay.
J: I thought it would be more understood.

B: So you left it.

J: Yeah. Again that was one of those things—cause I revised this during lunch period—I had what like an hour and a half

B: yeah.

J: and that was one of those things that I would have um, that I would have taken a little time to figure out how to change everything.

B: mm hmm.

J: I'm sure I definitely still could but,

In this excerpt of our conversation, John noticed the comment, and acknowledged that his “subjectivity” or his own perspective strongly flavored the essay. He seemed to understand Maggie’s point that not all cultures may value individualism, John even points to having some diversity in the class, but then argues that “the rest of” the students would understand, and that his perspective was “the American way.” Not completely satisfied with his own explanation of why he chose not to revise, he then blames time as a factor. At the end of this excerpt, he really begins to doubt his decision not to revise, and states “I'm sure I definitely still could.” However, he lets the final “but” trail off, and in his revision for the portfolio, it is clear that he chose not to make any changes to the original. John grapples with the comment, and notes that “I would have taken a little time to figure out how to change everything.” So, though John understands the gist of what Maggie’s comment is asking, he is unsure of how to revise. His lack of envisioning
a textual revision combined with his lack of time and disagreement with Maggie’s position led to his ultimate decision not to revise this section.

**Implications and Conclusions**

Appropriation tensions arise even with astute students who understand the teacher feedback. Candice, in particular through her interviews with me and discussions with her professor, seemed to grasp the intent behind Stephan’s comments. However, she fundamentally disagreed with the direction some of Stephan’s comments were taking her. Candice had both the understanding and the confidence to negotiate this appropriation, as she made changes elsewhere in her essay to accommodate Stephan’s comments. This potential appropriation bothered Candice quite a bit, as she mentioned the issue frequently in our interview. Though she negotiated her own revision in response to Stephan’s comment, she still toyed with the idea of addressing the comment more directly. She felt a strong pull to not only acknowledge and understand Stephan’s comments, but to follow their revision suggestions.

Candice did not reveal her inner conflict to Stephan, but in the space of the interview with me, felt comfortable enough to express her concerns. This suggests that even if teachers write appropriative comments, they may not discover from the students that students find these comments misleading. Perhaps providing other spaces for discussion of teacher comments, such as in peer groups or in writing a reflection on the teacher’s feedback, teachers can elicit more of students’ points of disagreement so that these issues can be more directly addressed and negotiated in the composition classroom.
Both Stephanie and Candice demonstrated that negotiation of Stephan’s comments was easier once they understood what the comment was asking them to do. Though they disagreed with Stephan, there was no forum for them to negotiate back and forth with Stephan in oral communication. Rather, the negotiation in these texts was largely internal within the students. Both Stephanie and Candice came up with compromise strategies such as repeating their focal point in order to address Stephan’s feedback. Stephanie’s negotiation of Stephan’s comments can be seen most visually in her second page of her first graded draft (see Appendix A). This visual demonstration of negotiation using the writing reactions protocol suggests that encouraging students to write in response to teacher comments may open up avenues of further negotiation in this written communication.

Student agency in this chapter took two different forms. Stephanie and Candice expressed agency through their understanding and negotiation of Stephan’s comments. John and Hoc also expressed agency, though due to their lack of understanding Maggie’s comments, were not able to negotiate and/or chose to not act on her comments. From John and Hoc’s textual action alone, it would seem that they simply misread Maggie’s comments. However, particularly in Hoc’s cases, the issue was brought up several times during our interview, and a strong level of disagreement accompanied misunderstanding. Hoc was very aware of what Maggie wanted him to revise but he just felt that he had already done it. He even attempts one direct address of Maggie’s comments to try to appease her, but ultimately, he finds her suggestions unnecessary for his revision. Had Maggie known that Hoc disagreed with the intent of the comments, she may have been able to better explain why she felt these additions were needed and how they could help
the essay. However, both Hoc and Maggie felt disappointed by the other’s lack of
good communication and ultimately Hoc ceased trying to complete essays for Maggie’s class.

For teachers giving written feedback, the tensions described above in
appropriation and student agency suggest that more avenues need to be available for
students to express their perspectives, whether through reflection, response to teacher
comment through a writing reactions protocol or through oral conferencing. Opening up
these avenues of negotiation gives students more options for a back and forth exchange
with the teacher. Rather than treating teacher feedback as set-in-stone, students may
begin to see feedback as something they come to understand and then negotiate with.

Also, for teachers, this implies that the goal of feedback may not be to have
students follow all of our directions. Instead, students’ learning and writing development
would be better served through the process of negotiating revisions to an essay. This
means, however, that we as teachers may need to provide more explanation of our
comments, and we may need to be content when students do not address every comment
written on their text.

For researchers, looking at the dialogic nature of appropriation puts more power
into students’ hands than previous studies such as Brannon and Knoblauch’s (1982) work
assumes. By exploring this feedback dialogic that Onore (1989) and Tardy (2006) have
discussed, we as researchers may be able to focus more fully on how students play a role
in processing written feedback.

Another concern for researchers is examining the comment in the longitudinal
classroom context. This bigger picture illustrates how students may learn to work with
teacher commentary as they develop a relationship with that instructor over time (Lee &
Schallert, 2008). In this study, Stephanie builds a feedback relationship with Stephan that extends over multiple comments, over multiple papers. Stephanie's cumulative understanding of the teacher's comments helped her move from a fix-it strategy towards a confident college approach that included negotiation of commentary. What researchers can begin to explore through students like Stephanie is how students learn and develop a system for negotiating feedback.

Appropriation is still a concern to be addressed in research and teaching. In several teacher handbooks, the idea of appropriation is explored from the teacher's perspective. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) and White (2007) explore this issue in discussing guidelines for giving response to student writing. Instead of asking the question "how can we structure our comments" (White, 2007, p. 52) the question may be "how can students structure their revisions" to resist appropriation. Stephan embraced all of the strategies recommended such as stepping back (Tardy 2006) and indirect questioning (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), and still managed to write comments that his students interpreted as appropriative. This suggests that despite 'best practices' of teachers, appropriation is still possible and an issue that needs further address in research and teaching.

To mitigate this appropriation, more attention needs to be given in the classroom to train students how to read teacher commentary (see my extended discussion of this issue in Chapter V). As teachers hold the authority in the classroom (Greenhalgh, 1992), it is necessary to explicitly permit students to ignore some comments while adopting others. Welch (1998) has questioned whether teachers can avoid appropriation at all: "no matter how "nondirective" or "open-ended" I may strive to be, no matter how hard I
might work to tease out the competing discursive threads—with each word, each sentence [of feedback], I work toward defining a reality for Bill’s draft” (p. 376). Therefore, teachers may look away from re-structuring the text of the commentary towards re-structuring how students are taught to read and interpret this feedback in the classroom context.
The goal of this dissertation is to bring student voices to prominence in discussions of feedback and revision. In the teacher feedback and student revision process, there are three important components: the teacher feedback as it is given and interpreted, the student revision as a thought and textual process of creation, and the student learning that results from actions of interpretation/understanding and creation. In the process of feedback and revision, student agency and teacher appropriation influence the negotiation of both commentary and textual change. Thus, it is important to look to these issues as well in discussions of feedback and revision. Research has thus far neglected to represent student voices as they interpret teacher feedback and make revision decisions. By including student voices, teachers and researchers can better describe and provide conditions that promote student learning.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss implications for research, implications for theory and implications for teaching writing. These implications will re-shape the landscape of feedback research and teaching to include the contours and textures of student voices. These voices alert us to the very real ways that students interpret, use and learn from our feedback.
**Implications for Research**

There are a number of implications from this dissertation that may help fill the gaps left in earlier research on feedback and return composition to its roots as established by Murray (1972) and Sommers (1980). From including student voices, it is evident in this dissertation that knowledge transfer, agency, appropriation, process vs. product, longitudinal research, research sites and peer review are issues that must be considered in the examination of the feedback dialogic. Further, methodological changes to studies such as adding social context, revising our interpretations of student silences and accessing cognitive operations are important to construct a clearer picture of teacher feedback and student revision. Finally, including student voices changes the research questions composition has been asking for the last several decades.

**Knowledge Transfer**

In this study of student voices, it is clear from interviews that students were able to remember comments written on earlier essays and use them to inform their understandings of these comments in later drafts. Particularly in John’s case, as Maggie wrote frequent comments about his citation in his first two essays, no comments on citation were needed in the final essay. Thus, knowledge transfer can occur with repeated prompting in different textual contexts. Also, knowledge transfer can occur without additional prompting as the student learns.
Student Agency in Revision

Student agency is an avenue of future investigation. It is a topic that enriches discussions of appropriation and students' rights to their own texts. As Straub (1997) and Reid (1994) suggest, this need for ownership may be most visible among first language students, but investigating agency in the multilingual classroom may better reflect the diversity of the contemporary college classroom. Revision manifests student agency, as students take action (or not) based on their choices about what feedback to incorporate or accommodate and what not to revise. John and Hoc made strategic decisions not to revise many points that Maggie raised in their essays with her comments. They did not ignore the feedback, as they discussed the comments openly with me during our interviews. However, they chose not to address the comments in revision due to fundamental disagreements with the comments. For John, these decisions were ‘successful’ as by the end of the semester, he earned the A he desired. For Hoc, however, the choice to not revise contributed to low grades. Stephanie and Candice received A’s. With varied outcomes, these students displayed agency in the form of revision and non-revision.

Students and Appropriation

Students’ revisions in this study showed that even when they disagreed with teachers, they felt it necessary to accommodate the teacher’s comments and made revisions that acknowledged the feedback. For example, Candice attempted to make changes to her gardening essay later in the text to accommodate comments Stephan wrote
in the introduction. Three of the students—Candice, Stephanie and Hoc—attempted to please their instructors through revisions. This student desire to please is a sign of the power differential inherent between teacher and student. This suggests that appropriation may still be an issue relevant to scholarly discussions of feedback and revision. It most definitely has not been resolved, contrary to Hall’s (1995) claim.

Further, as this study includes student voices on appropriation, it is clear that students do exert some agency in the process of negotiating appropriation. Future research may give student voices more of a role in discussions of appropriation. This research demonstrates that students are not helpless victims of the teacher commentary, but that their interpretations and confidence are key factors in determining how appropriating feedback becomes.

**Avoiding Binaries**

There is often tension between teachers’ desires to help students become better writers vs. helping students develop a better writing product (Connors & Lunsford, 1993). Composition has advanced from a rather either/or approach towards a more sociocognitive approach that considers both the social context and the cognitive operations. The findings in this study indicate that understanding the cognitive operations students use in the social context in which these operations occur is important to developing a comprehensive picture of students’ writing and learning.

Further, findings from this study suggest that considering both the writing process and the aimed-for outcome or product of students’ writing shape student learning. For example, Stephanie became a better overall writer through her final “global” revision, her
process, and arguably wrote a better product as she moved from a B to an A on the essay. Her striving to reach the A, a better writing product, impacted her learning as did Stephanie’s efforts to learn a new global revising process. John mentioned in our fourth interview that he learned to be a better writer over the course of the semester, and improved his writing process. However, Maggie’s support of John creating a better writing product also helped him learn how to be more precise with his arguments. His efforts to earn the A he wanted on the essay fueled his progress as a developing writer. Future studies may further explore how students may develop both process and product simultaneously as they learn in writing classes.

**Longitudinal Research and Research Sites**

Learning takes time. Particularly in Stephanie and John’s cases, learning did not occur within the first essay. Instead, they developed understanding and then created revisions over the course of a semester. Thus, future research on student learning would do well to take a longitudinal perspective and examining student learning over the course of at least a semester or more.

Also, it may behoove researchers to consider sites such as the one in this study as fertile grounds for insight into writing, particularly for first-year, multilingual writers. The diversity of the two year institution in this study reflects a reality that many institutions are encountering, and given the state of the economy, two-year institutions like the one in this study may become increasingly prevalent sites for teaching first-year composition. Many multilingual writers study at these two-year institutions, a population Kapper (2006) calls “missed” by publications on second language writing (p. 256). More
research is needed at these two-year institutions where teachers have a high course load and a diverse student population. Research at these institutions may better reflect the real circumstances under which first-year composition is most often taught.

Peer Review and Other Sources of Feedback

Teachers are not the only source of feedback to students. In my pilot study (Kramer, 2007) students used their peers, the internet and their siblings for guidance in revision. From this pilot, one student in particular seemed to ignore her teacher’s feedback until it was corroborated by her brother. Though outside of the purview of this dissertation, in the student interviews, Candice, Stephanie, John and Hoc all mentioned peer review. However, when asked if they used comments from their peers, the consensus was that they ignored their peers’ feedback. Future research can examine multiple sources of feedback and how they converge in the feedback dialogic.

Methodological Changes

Context is an important but missing element in many feedback studies such as Straub (1997). However, context—as in Conrad and Goldstein’s (1999) case study—strongly impacted students’ revision decisions and learning in this study. As discussed in Chapter III, more important than the rhetorical form of the comments is the context that surrounds teacher feedback and student revision. Factors such as the grades students are given on their work or how students are praised impact student motivation and accommodation of commentary in revision. Many studies of feedback (Chandler, 2003; Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Smith, 1997) have focused on whether comments should be
directive or non-directive, in the margins or at the end, in question or statement format. This focus on form ignores the significance of the surrounding context. Looking at the larger context illustrates how students interpret and use commentary. Feedback thus cannot be examined in a vacuum, or through one draft or one revision.

Another part of this context is student motivation, an area touched on in this dissertation but hopefully an avenue of exploration in future research. In this study, the clear difference between Stephanie and Hoc’s motivations shows that the learner who took the greatest amount of responsibility for her learning did in fact learn more. Stephanie, from the beginning of the course, focused on how she could gradually improve or learn. Though she wanted an A, she prioritized learning over this grade and saw a direct connection between her effort and the product. Stephanie commented "the more work I put into it [the essay] the better paper it will be.” Further, Stephanie saw Stephan’s comments as helping her in the future. She notes in our final interview, “it’s really helpful to have as many comments on there as you can cause then it just kind of helps you in general on future papers.” She went on to say that she had to write papers for most of her classes, so even though she had finished the English requirement, the skills she learned in this class would benefit her in the future. Stephanie’s strong motivation helped her achieve her goal of learning, whereas Hoc abandoned all efforts to write at the end of the semester much less interpret Maggie’s comments. Exploring student motivation behind revision decisions may enhance descriptions of contextual factors that impact student learning.

In researching students’ processing of teacher feedback, this study demonstrates that silences or non-revision can be as much a revision choice as textual change. Earlier
studies that have identified students as ignoring teacher feedback (such as Hyland, 1998) may have missed the students’ decision making processes that fed into these non-revisions. Findings from this study show that agency can underlie decisions not to revise. Thus, studies of revision and response must look to interviews and observations as well as texts to reflect how students revise, and researchers may want to re-think the interpretation of silence as ‘ignoring’ teacher feedback.

Accessing students’ cognitive processes as they write has always been a difficult task in writing research. However, a multi-modal qualitative approach is a way to address these issues of processing in feedback and revision. As demonstrated in this study, students were quite articulate about their interpretations of teacher feedback, and seemed very metacognitively aware of how they made decisions when revising. This suggests that it is possible—using the triangulated methodology of observation, interview and text analysis—to access students’ decision-making processes in the feedback dialogic. Particularly critical to this access were the text-based stimulated-recall interviews after students revised. I suggest that future studies include such methods in addition to text analysis or survey. Further, the writing reactions protocol—in the cases of John and Stephanie—supported findings from the student interviews. This research method may be a tool for future research investigating students’ revision processes and particularly mark instances of student confusion that are otherwise glossed over in students’ self reporting.

These student voices heard in this study shift the focus of our research questions from the teacher to the student recipient. We may begin asking “how do students understand and create revisions from our feedback?” This channels the line of inquiry
towards the outcomes of the feedback rather than the writing of the feedback. Focus on student voices is important for future research. Student voices balance out the reporting of the feedback dialogic, offsetting the extensive research on how teachers form their comments. As this is one of few studies on feedback that includes student voices describing their revision processes, future studies may focus both questions and methods on deciphering the students' perspective on feedback and revision.

**Implications For Theory**

Learning theories have seemed to focus in the past on either the internal cognitive processes of student learning or the social context. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) provide a theory that incorporates both in an educational context, the classroom-situated environment of composition studies. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) distinguish between students' **understanding** of teacher feedback and their obedience towards teacher feedback, a distinction important in tracing which actions in revision may lead to long-term writing development. Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) description of **creation** offers composition a way to describe how revision is in fact a new text that student develop through planning and generating ideas. I describe the implications for future theoretical learning models in the following two sections.

**Understanding: Essential to Learning**

Feedback can contribute to student learning in writing, when students **understand** these comments and grades. As described in Chapter III, feedback is not transparent to students. Instead, it often takes time and some amount of trial and error
before students come to UNDERTAND why their teachers wrote the comments. In this study, I provide a vocabulary to describe students’ processes of REMEMBERING then UNDERSTANDING then CREATING revisions. Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) teased out the students’ gradual UNDERSTANDING of teacher comments over the semester. The distinction between REMEMBERING and UNDERSTANDING was particularly helpful in identifying when students learned from the feedback.

Students’ UNDERSTANDING was enhanced by factors such as repetition, praise and grading. Stephanie and John remembered and then gradually understood comments over the course of the semester as the comments were repeated. Candice and Stephanie learned to use the overlap between marginal and end comments to interpret Stephan’s meaning. Candice and Stephanie also learned from both praise and grade changes, using these as barometers of their overall learning and writing development. These factors were all shown to build students’ UNDERSTANDING. These factors also helped Stephanie, John and Candice become better writers. Theories of learning may focus on these factors and explore others that contribute to students’ learning, with the goal of better describing how the feedback dialogic impacts student learning.

However, not all students were able to use these contextual factors to support their learning and development. Hoc’s case in particular shows that though end comments helped Candice and Stephanie, the end comments confused Hoc. Thus, theories of learning and feedback must consider the individual context of a particular student and a particular teacher in a particular classroom. UNDERSTANDING is thus dependent not only on context, but on the individual student.
Revised as CREATION

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) provided a framework for explaining the difference between students making sentence level changes to an essay, and students substantively revising or creating a new essay. This CREATION embodies Murray’s visions of revision as “a reconsideration of subject, form, and audience” (1972, p. 4). CREATION is a complete reconsideration of text that involves the planning and generating or discovering new content that accompanies the production element of revision. Indeed, the students expressed in interviews and through their texts that their revisions were new CREATIONS. Stephanie described in detail how her planning process of revision changed from the first to the final essay, how she incorporated Stephan’s comments but also used her own sense of what flowed to make revisions and “overhaul” the essay. This reflects Sommers’ (1980) definition of revision as both a textual action and a thought process. This work complicates theorists’ understandings of revisions as “operations” that students enact (Williams, 2004). Instead, these findings suggest that students plan, generate new material and strategize as they CREATE revisions.

Also, UNDERSTANDING is essential to moving towards the CREATION process. This study found that factors influencing UNDERSTANDING most strongly impacted the CREATION revision decisions of the students. Theorizing more ways that UNDERSTANDING impacts CREATION would be helpful in describing the revisions that students make.
Implications For Teachers

There are many implications for teachers as well as for researchers and theorists. It is particularly important to consider these implications as we train the next generation of composition instructors.

Training Students to Read Teacher Feedback

One implication from this research is that we as teachers need to train students to read our feedback. Teacher feedback is not transparent to students. Several factors contribute to students' ability to understand the teacher's comment: legibility, conceptual understanding, seeing from the audience's perspective, the ability to metacognitively look at one's own writing and a degree of confidence. Given this long list of requirements to understand teacher feedback, we should be even more amazed at how well students are able to read and interpret and act on our written commentary. However, in teasing out this long list of criteria for understanding teacher feedback, it is perhaps evident that each element requires a degree of knowledge and training. It would behoove us to discern ways to teach each of these elements so that more students can understand more teacher commentary and develop not only better revisions but develop as writers.

Legibility is a concern with teacher written feedback that plagued both teachers and students in my study. Students, usually with some difficulty, were able to decipher most if not all of the teacher's scratching. Due to the limited access to technology on this particular campus, the teachers felt that hand written comments were most appropriate. In Stephanie's case, for one of Stephan's comments that she couldn't decode, she "swept
it under the rug” and tried to revise around it. However, most of the students were able to read as far as decode the words that the teacher wrote on their essays. This is a dilemma for teachers whose students may not have a home computer where they can read typed comments. In these cases, writing as neatly as possible in the margins or even attaching a larger piece of paper to provide additional marginal space may help increase teacher comment legibility.

Students need the conceptual understanding of what and why the teacher is asking for revision in order to make an informed choice about the type of revision they will enact. Developing conceptual knowledge about writing takes time, and it was clear in this study that the students with more college-oriented writing experience (Candice’s GED course and John’s high school AP class) were better able to understand teacher comments. However, despite Stephanie’s more limited training, over the course of the semester and due in part to her tenacity, she learned many of the writing concepts that led her to successful revisions. Hoc’s lack of training most clearly inhibited his writing performance, and perhaps this mixed with language issues, as he read Maggie’s suggestion that he had too much information per paragraph as just too much information. For those students who reach our writing classes with little background in college-level writing or in reading teacher feedback, perhaps overt lessons using other student drafts with teacher comments and discussing these as a whole class will help those who are new to teacher feedback learn to interpret comments.

Understanding teacher feedback encourages students to try to understand the audience’s perspective. As Stephanie commented, teacher feedback helped her see what Stephan was thinking about her paper. This requires students to step out of their default
mode of operation and their own sense of what they have written to account for their reader. This accounting for both self and reader is what Newkirk (1989) suggests complicates discussions of ownership of writing. In-class activities that ask students to think from multiple perspectives may aid in this transition from self-focus to a more expansive view of writing for a particular audience.

Metacognitive awareness is another important element in developing both writing and as a writer. The students in this study all demonstrated strong metacognitive skills in describing their writing to me and why they made the choices they did in their revisions. Perhaps the nature of the study encouraged this meta-conversation, and as John claimed, helped him form better study habits. Implementing this in the classroom is more difficult, but possible through peer discussion groups and reflective writing assignments. Pushing students to talk about their writing choices particularly after receiving a grade on their revision increases their awareness of what they did while writing, and gives them more opportunities to think about the relative successes and failures of the strategies they employed. This in turn gives students opportunities to change their approaches on subsequent essays.

Finally, in order to understand teacher comments, a degree of confidence is needed as demonstrated most clearly by Candice. She trusted her interpretations of Stephan's comments enough to act on them, whereas Hoc seemed not to trust his interpretations of Maggie's comments, particularly in his second paper, and thus did not act. Stephanie and John gained confidence over the course of the semester, and both felt by the end that they had learned a lot about writing from their teachers. I believe that praise goes a long way towards instilling this essential confidence in students, and both
Stephanie and John’s teachers praised them in class though not always on their essays as much. Praising students like Hoc may be difficult on occasion, but it seems an important step in helping students to invest in revising.

Repetition

Students often need repetition to learn. Stephanie and John first remembered their teachers’ repeating comments before understanding the comment. For teachers, this suggests that patience with students is an essential part of helping students learn. Students may not find feedback clear the first or even second time it is given. Thus, repeating the comments in different contexts may trigger students’ memories of previous commentary and focus student energy on revising this particular problem. Learning for the students in this study was a cumulative action most clearly evident at the end of the semester. Particularly for Stephanie, learning from teacher feedback was a slow forward progression where Stephan’s comments and grades from the first essay, the revision of the first essay, the second essay and in-class all contributed to Stephanie’s substantive revision of the final portfolio essay. By examining students’ progress over the course of the semester, it became clear in this study that learning rarely occurs the first time feedback is given. Instead, teachers and would do well to take a longitudinal view, and overcome their reluctance to repeat themselves on student essays.

Repetition also seemed, particularly in John’s case, to show different elements of the comment as it appeared in different contexts, with slight variations. Repeating essentially the same comment, Maggie gave John both the action “use word alphabetized by” and the example, “Brookhaven” over the course of two essays. Both of these
approaches combined to help John interpret the comment and come to a successful revision in his third essay.

Repetition or coordination of marginal and end comments also appeared important in developing student understanding in this dissertation. End and marginal comments served complementary functions: the end comment gave a general strategy for revision while the marginal comment pointed to a specific example. Though repeating the same comment both in the margin and at the end may seem unnecessary to teachers, it was clear from Stephanie and Candice's cases that this approach helped build their understanding. Teachers may consider repeating comments in both the margin and end to help students identify the issue and then generalize a revision strategy.

**Praise**

An often overlooked part of teaching and responding to student writing, praise in this study proved effective for two of the students. However, so little praise was given to any of the students, it begs the question how much more successful revision could they have accomplished with more marginal, specific praise? The praise to Stephanie and Candice built on their strengths, and also built their confidence. It was the feedback that Candice preferred most from Stephan. These findings suggest to teachers that praise is important to remember to give, particularly when it engages with the student's content of the essay.
Grades as Feedback

This study demonstrates that grading and feedback may often come together, and one may inform the students' reading and interpretation of the other. In this study’s description of Stephanie, the grade and feedback combination suggested ways she could improve to reach her goal of an A. Thus, teachers may, instead of simply slapping a grade on the final essay, provide brief written commentary that explains the student’s grade. This may be particularly helpful to students at the beginning of the semester, as in Stephanie’s case.

Further, as the student’s revision is evaluated and graded by the instructor or teacher, the teacher plays an important role in validating the student’s success in the revision. In Stephanie’s case, she takes Stephan’s graded assessments of her revisions very seriously, and believes that the improved grades over the course of the semester demonstrate that she learned. These findings suggest that the student’s view of the teacher’s grading policy impacts revision, particularly revisions later in the semester. For teachers, this implies that clearly describing grades may increase students’ revision and writing success and build better communication between student and teacher.

“Ignoring” Teacher Feedback

All of the students in the study seemed to read the teachers’ comments very closely. This suggests that students may pay more attention to teacher commentary than previously assumed. In fact, in John and Hoc’s case, non-revision did not mean that they ignored their teacher’s comments. Instead, these were strategic decisions that they made
in the process of revision and when they disagreed with the teacher. If students scrutinize our commentary so closely, then as teachers, we must choose carefully what comments are written in order to support student learning.

**Students’ Ingenuity**

Students are resourceful, and may use even our most casual comments to learn. Candice in particular was adept at taking comments like “interesting” and using them to improve her essay and develop skill in adding detailed support in her writing. Thus, students may read all teacher comments as prompts for revision.

**Students and Appropriation**

Appropriation is still a concern that teachers need to be alert to in the contemporary composition classroom. Even Candice, the most confident of the four students, felt that Stephan was trying to appropriate her work at one point. Giving students explicit permission to negotiate teacher feedback may be one way to promote student agency and minimize appropriation in the composition classroom (Gorzelsky, 2009). Also, it was clear from this study that Candice and Stephanie’s increased understanding of their teacher’s comments made it easier for them to resist appropriation in their textual revisions.

**Individual Student Needs**

Though the students in this study did carefully read teacher commentary, they did not always learn from this feedback. Hoc seemed especially confounded by Maggie’s
responses to his drafts. It seemed his language and writing experience inhibited his ability to decipher feedback. Thus, it is essential for teachers to consider the individual student’s needs when responding to student writing.

Avenues for Negotiation

In order to support students and train them to read teacher feedback, more avenues for negotiation are necessary. A version of the writing reactions protocol designed for the classroom, peer groups or writing reflections may generate the space students need to interact with teacher feedback. These “backstage” (Newkirk, 1995) places may allow students to recognize what feedback they can use and what they might choose not to act on. Avenues for negotiation open up possibilities for increased student engagement with teacher commentary, increased understanding of comments and increased flexibility to exert agency. Finally, by opening up avenues of negotiation, teachers may need to relinquish a degree of control, and acknowledge to students that it is okay not to use all the comments in revision.

Conclusion

Future studies of feedback and revision may further explore how students interpret or read feedback, what contextual factors build towards student understanding and learning, how students enact agency, and how motivation plays a role in students’ interpretations and use of feedback. These questions notably focus on the student, the part of the feedback dialogic that has not been investigated thoroughly. Student-centered teaching and researching is necessary to unpack how students learn and what conditions
best elicit learning. This dissertation argues that students are able to articulate why they make the revision choices that they do, and that students are able to negotiate feedback, even feedback that seems appropriative. I suggest that we stop underestimating students and ask them what works in our composition teaching. Feedback is an important prompt for student learning that students acknowledge as a vital part of writing. To close, I quote Stephanie as she describes how teacher comments work for her: “It’s just that some of the things you don’t think of until you see the comments that you’re like oh wow, I didn’t even realize that that wasn’t clear…or that makes it look like I’m trying to say this when that’s not what I was trying to say.” This student, as many others we have encountered in our teaching and researching, uses comments as essential tools to develop as a writer. This should hearten teachers who question whether the amount of time and effort it takes to provide written feedback is really worth it.
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APPENDIX A: STEPHANIE'S DRAFT

Marijuana Legalization

Should the medical use of marijuana in the United States be allowed? Should we pass a law allowing the use of medical marijuana? Just what does medical marijuana do?

Let's look at some facts. The website URL reports:

- Marijuana is actually less dangerous than alcohol, cigarettes, and even most over-the-counter medicines or prescriptions. Marijuana, in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man. The only well confirmed negative effect of marijuana is caused by the smoke, which contains three times more tar and five times more carbon monoxide than tobacco. But even the heaviest marijuana smokers rarely use as much as an average tobacco smoker (“Legalizing Marijuana”).

The main use of medical marijuana is typically to provide pain relief, and to help stimulate appetite in cancer patients. If medical marijuana were legalized, other benefits may be recognized as well. Medical marijuana is a valuable asset to not only the medical community, but the government as well. Legalizing medical marijuana would help many people in the United States find relief from medical conditions that cannot effectively be achieved otherwise.

The use of marijuana is illegal, yet many people still partake in it. It would be wise to legalize the use of marijuana for many reasons. The money that the United States
government could collect from legalizing and selling marijuana is significant. Legalizing marijuana would also stop the addition of other drugs to marijuana by some drug dealers; this would make it a safer drug for the people who use it. Making marijuana legal would lower its appeal to people for the fact that it is no longer an illegal drug. The positive effects of legalizing marijuana far outweigh the negative effects of using the drug.

If medical marijuana is legalized, then the use of it should be regulated. (Regulating the use of medical marijuana would help establish its safe use.) It should require a prescription. By requiring a prescription a doctor can determine if it is indeed needed. Another important stipulation of legalization would be that the prescriptions only be valid for people eighteen years and older, just as tobacco is only available to people eighteen years of age and older. One last important aspect of legalizing medical marijuana would be to monitor the individuals that are prescribed it. This way any ill side effects, or health concerns would be attended to immediately.

The responsible and limited use of marijuana benefited me in the past. I am 34 years old, married, and a responsible mother of two children. I am a hard working college student, and also am a manager at a local retail store. In the past I would occasionally smoke some marijuana to relieve the stresses of everyday life. I have problems in my life, who doesn't? For my problems I saw a therapist. I had informed my therapist that I occasionally smoked marijuana to help with stress, and anxiety. I asked her if I should quit doing so, if it was bad for my mental health. What she said to me stunned me. She explained that I should not quit merely because it was illegal. From what I told her, the benefits far outweighed the risks. She also said since I was
responsible in my use of marijuana that was not a big issue.

When I would smoke marijuana the stresses of everyday life became more controllable. I tend to be an anxious person, and I worry excessively. My thinking slowed down to a rate that was easier for me to process. When I smoked I calmed down, and I saw that some things I could not control. I also saw things in perspective. I have suffered from depression since I was sixteen years old, and have been on antidepressants since then. The antidepressants helped manage my depression, but alone they were not a cure. I have been countless therapists to no avail. No amount of talking could bring out the root cause of my depression. After I had my first son fourteen years ago, when I was 19 years old, I smoked marijuana for the first time. The experience was surreal. For the first time in my life my mind slowed down enough for me to process the overload of information that was busily buzzing around.

Marijuana was not a quick fix for my depression, but it led me to a better understanding of where my depression came from. By better understanding my depression, I can better manage it. The fact that I smoked marijuana along with therapy and antidepressants helped me control my depression. When I was “under the influence” I could sort through my problems one by one. I could also evaluate what things I truly had no control over, and I could accept them for what they were. Smoking marijuana has done me far more good mentally than any therapist could ever do alone. I had repressed, or forgotten certain things in my life. These things have affected who I am, and until I sorted out these things, they caused stress in my life. Smoking marijuana brought my
Is marijuana a drug that helps express creativity? Another benefit of smoking marijuana for me was the ability to express my creativity easily. In the past when I smoked marijuana it brought out the creative side in me. I am an artist. I love to draw, write, and create various forms of art. When I was "high" I created amazing works of art. Relating back to marijuana slowing down my mind, it was that that helped me to express my creativity. I could relax and let my creative side take hold, without the worries of every day life butting in.

There are side effects of marijuana, just as there are side effects with other drugs. According to Ruschman:

Nearly all medicines have toxic, potentially lethal effects. But marijuana is not such a substance. There is no record in the extensive medical literature describing a proven, documented cannabis-induced fatality. (Ruschman 44)

All drugs have side effects that can possibly occur, and marijuana is no different. Ruschmann links marijuana use to the following health issues: "Marijuana use has also been linked to other problems, including damage to the immune system, heart, lungs, and reproductive organs" (Ruschmann 32). Marijuana does not seem to cause an ill effect on most of its users. Gerdes points out: "There is ample evidence that the majority of the 70 million Americans who have tried marijuana are doing just fine" (Gerdes 61). When you smoke too much marijuana, it is not toxic. When you smoke too much marijuana you
“pass out”. Gerdes reinforces the truth of this interesting fact, "It is impossible to take a lethal dose of marijuana, regardless of its THC content" (Gerdes 63). Side effects of alcohol tend to be much worse than the side effects of marijuana. Someone can drink much and get alcohol poisoning, and this can even prove fatal for some people. A hangover is another major side effect of alcohol. Some people drink and drive, and these when they do, serious and even fatal accidents can occur. Not to mention the side effects of hangovers, and bad temperaments.

The government has much to gain from legalizing marijuana. One benefit is that there will be no unnecessary additives or fillers. When illegal marijuana is purchased, there's always a chance that the seller has added something to the marijuana. Then there's the benefit of money, and lots of it. The government could make a ton of money by selling marijuana. On top of the profit of selling marijuana, there is the tax dollars could be made as well. Ruschmann gives these figures; “Jeffrey Miron, a professor at the University, estimated that legal marijuana would bring in $2.4 billion a year in 2010 if it were taxed like other goods, and $6.2 billion a year if the government taxed it comparable to those on alcohol and tobacco” (Ruschmann 100). There is also the benefit of money to drug cartel. Selling marijuana would eliminate money to drug cartel. People would stop buying drugs from illegal sources, and thus the drug cartel would have less money. This would help take money out of the hands of drug cartel and put it back into the hands of hard working American citizens. This will cause a boost in the economy. The cultivation, processing, and sale of marijuana would bring many new and needed jobs to the people of America. There is so much good the government could
do with the money gained from the sale of marijuana. Schools could be improved, cities
that have fallen into economic slumps rebuilt, drug education could be expanded upon in
schools to help better educate children on the dangers of drugs. The benefits seem
endless.

When most people that are told they cannot do something, it typically makes them
want to do it more. It is a psychological effect. If we make marijuana legal, fewer
children may be tempted to try it for that reason alone. The website AlterNet explains
the illegal appeal of marijuana to teenagers: “A regulated, legal market in marijuana
would reduce marijuana sales and usage among teenagers, as well as reduce their
exposure to other drugs in the illegal market. The illegality of marijuana makes it more
valuable than if it were legal, providing opportunities for teenagers to make easy money
selling it to their friends” (“The Top Ten Reasons Marijuana Should Be Legal”). Yes
kids may still want to try it like they want to try alcohol, but the appeal may not be as
great. The government would be able to do better studies of the drug, and its effects.
The Surgeon General would then be able to better educate the public on the risks of
marijuana. The public would be better informed of both the benefits and the risks of
marijuana.

As with any drug marijuana has its down side, and its side effects. The pros of
legalizing marijuana far outweigh the cons. The government has much to gain in the
legalization of marijuana. It would better control the use of marijuana, and make tax
money as an added benefit. Marijuana is not for everyone, but it can benefit people who
I did a major rewrite of this, eliminated some things (ideas) and added more evidence to prove my point. Big revision. Added additional sources.Revision took as long as writing my original paper. I'm using this for my thesis.

This is interesting.
Works Cited


Medical Marijuana Should be Legalized in the United States

The topic of legalizing medical marijuana sparks many intense debates. Most people that discuss the issue are typically completely on one side or the other. This subject ranks up with religion and politics in conversational intensity. So should the use of medical marijuana in the United States be legalized? Some states such as California, and Colorado already allow the use of medical marijuana. So should all states allow it? There are many arguments for and against the legalization of medical marijuana. People for legalization of medical marijuana will argue that it is a safe and an effective pain-relieving drug. People against the legalization of medical marijuana will argue that it can cause health problems, and can lead to the use of harsher illegal drugs.

Medical marijuana can be used to treat many problematic ailments. People with glaucoma find effective pain relief from medical marijuana. Cancer patients can use medical marijuana for pain control, and for appetite stimulation. Medical marijuana is known for its pain relieving aspects, and is safer than some prescription drugs, and some over-the-counter drugs. In the book *Marijuana*, Tardiff presents how medical marijuana is safer than some other drugs:

While marijuana is not harmless, it harms pale compared to over-the-counter drugs and euphoriantas like alcohol and tobacco, and common pacifiers like Valium and Xanax. In the view of the British medical journal *Lancet*, an objective person can reliably judge pot "less of a threat than alcohol or tobacco." Merely on the medical evidence alone,
The conclusion of the risks. If the risks of using medical marijuana outweighed the benefits then the legalization could always be reversed.

If medical marijuana was legalized other benefits may be recognized as well. Medical marijuana is a valuable asset not only to the medical community, but the government as well. The monetary benefit that the United States government could attain from legalizing and selling medical marijuana is significant. On top of the profit of selling marijuana, there are tax dollars that could be made as well. Ruschmann gives these figures; “Jeffrey Miron, a professor at Harvard University, estimated that legal marijuana would bring in $2.4 billion a year in revenue if it were taxed like other goods, and $6.2 billion a year if the government taxed it at rates comparable to those on alcohol and tobacco” (Ruschmann 100).

There is a lot of good the government could do with the money gained from the sale of marijuana. Schools could be improved, cities that have fallen into economic slumps rebuilt, drug education could be expanded upon in schools to help better educate children on the dangers of drugs. The benefits seem endless. There is also the issue of the drug cartel selling marijuana illegally. If the United States started selling medical marijuana, it would lessen money made by the drug cartel. Many people would stop buying drugs from illegal sources. This would help take money out of the hands of drug cartel, and put it into the hands of hard working American citizens. The cultivation, processing, and sale of marijuana would also bring many much-needed new jobs to the people of America. Americans earning profits from the legal cultivation, and sale of medical marijuana would cause a boost in the economy.

Illegally bought marijuana can be very dangerous. Some drug dealers add other drugs into the marijuana they sell. By legalizing the sale of medical marijuana the government would
have control of any additives put into it. This would make it a safer drug for the people who would use it legally. Ruschmann explains this concept, "Poisonous substances and hard drugs have been found in marijuana. A user who gets sick from these substances has no legal recourse because pure-food-and-drug and consumer-protection laws do not apply to illegal substances" (Ruschmann 97). Just as with other legal drugs, there would be standards for safety. Making medical marijuana legal may also lower its appeal to people for the fact that it is no longer an illegal drug. Most people have heard that people always want what they cannot have, just because they are told they cannot have it. In the book *Marijuana* Tardiff explains it like this:

> For every teen who refrains from trying marijuana because it's illegal (for adults), another is tempted by its status as "forbidden fruit." Many respond to the lies about marijuana by disbelieving warnings about more dangerous drugs. So much for protecting the kids by criminalizing the adults. (Tardiff 97-98)

The web site "Alter Net" further explains the illegal appeal of marijuana to teenagers: "A regulated, legal market in marijuana would reduce marijuana sales and usage among teenagers, as well as reduce their exposure to other drugs in the illegal market. The illegality of marijuana makes it more valuable than if it were legal, providing opportunities for teenagers to make easy money selling it to their friends" ("The Top Ten Reasons Marijuana Should Be Legal"). Yes kids may still want to try it, like they want to try alcohol, but the appeal may not be as great. The positive effects of legalizing medical marijuana outweigh the negative effects of using the drug. There can side effects with the use of medical marijuana, and for this reason, some conditions should be put into place.
Stipulations regulating the use of medical marijuana are important. If medical marijuana is legalized, then the use of it should be regulated. Regulating the use of medical marijuana would help establish its safe use. The use of medical marijuana should require a prescription. By requiring a prescription a doctor can determine if it is indeed needed. Unfortunately this would not stop the illegal use of marijuana, but for the people who legitimately need to use it, they could do so legally. Another important stipulation of legalization would be that the prescriptions only be valid for people eighteen years and older, just as tobacco is only available to people eighteen years old and older. Tardiff tells the results of a poll, “Two of every five Americans according to a 2003 Zogby poll-say ‘the government should treat marijuana more or less the same way it treats alcohol: It should regulate it, control it, tax it, and only make it illegal for children’” (Tardiff 93-94). One last important aspect of legalizing medical marijuana would be to monitor the individuals that it is prescribed to. This way any ill side effects or health concerns would be attended to immediately. The government would be able to do better studies of the drug, and its effects. The Surgeon General would then be able to better educate the public on the risks of marijuana, and the public would be better informed of both the benefits, and the risks of marijuana.

Side effects can happen with any drug, legal or otherwise. The use of medical marijuana is no different. There is the issue of negative side effects with the use of medical marijuana. According to Ruschman:

Nearly all medicines have toxic, potentially lethal effects. But marijuana is not such a substance. There is no record in the extensive medical literature describing a proven, documented cannabis-induced fatality. (Ruschmann 44)
There are health issues that can result from the use of marijuana. Ruschmann links marijuana use to the following health issues: "Marijuana use has also been linked to other problems, including damage to the immune system, heart, lungs, and reproductive organs" (Ruschmann 32). Marijuana does not seem to cause an ill effect on most of its users, and has not been toxic to any users. Gerdes points out: "There is ample evidence that the majority of the 70 million Americans who have tried marijuana are doing just fine... It is impossible to consume a lethal dose of marijuana, regardless of its THC content" (Gerdes 61-63). The side effects of alcohol tend to be much worse than the side effects of marijuana. Someone can drink too much and get alcohol poisoning, and this can sometimes prove fatal. Some people drink and drive, and when they do, serious and even fatal accidents can occur. Not to mention the side effects of bad judgment, hangovers, and bad temperaments.

I benefited from using marijuana in the past. When I was 19 years old, I smoked marijuana for the first time. The experience was surreal. For the first time in my life my mind slowed down enough for me to process the overload of information that was busily buzzing around. I would occasionally smoke some marijuana to relieve the stresses of everyday life. I suffer from depression, and for it I saw a therapist. I had informed my therapist that I occasionally smoked marijuana to help with stress, and anxiety. I asked her if I should quit doing so, and if it was bad for my mental health. What she said to me shocked me. She explained that I should not quit merely because it was illegal. For me, she explained that the benefits far outweighed the risks. She also said since I was responsible in my use of marijuana
that was not a big issue. She explained that by only smoking it on rare occasions I was not abusing the drug.

When I would smoke marijuana the stresses of every day life became more controllable, and my thinking slowed down to a rate that was easier for me to process. Medical marijuana may not slow down every user's thinking, but for me it was the desired effect. I have suffered from depression since I was sixteen years old, and have been on antidepressants since then. The antidepressants, and counseling helped manage my depression, but they alone were not a cure. I had seen countless therapists to no avail, and no amount of talking could bring out the root cause of my depression. Marijuana was not a quick fix for my depression, but it led me to a better understanding of where my depression came from. The fact that I smoked marijuana along with therapy and antidepressants helped me with my depression. When I was “under the influence” I could work through my problems one by one. I could also evaluate what things I truly had no control over, and I could accept them for what they were. Smoking marijuana also brought my repressed feelings to the surface so I could talk them out with someone, it did this by slowing my thoughts down enough for me to process them. Nothing else had ever been able to do so. I had tried various medications, stress techniques, and different therapists. Those alone were not successful for me. Who knows where I would be if I had never tried smoking marijuana.

Medical marijuana should be legalized in the United States. The pros of legalizing marijuana far outweigh the cons. Yes marijuana can have a down side, and side effects. However, the government has much to gain in the legalization of marijuana. The Government could better control the use of marijuana, and make a lot of money as an added benefit. Marijuana is not for everyone, but it can benefit people who cannot find relief in other
conventional drugs. It is time the federal government puts the choice in the hands of the people.
The United States is a democracy after all.

Works Cited


APPENDIX C: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Guiding questions for interviews:

Interview 1: Teacher: Background interview

- How has your teaching writing changed or stayed the same over the years? What has seemed to work really well in teaching writing?
- How do you let students know their progress? Hand written comments? Oral responses in class? Conferences outside of class? Tell me how you use each.
- At what stage in the drafting process do you usually comment in writing?
- What main principles do you [try to] follow when you provide feedback to students?
- How did you learn these principles?
- What frustrations, if any, have you had with providing feedback to students?

Interview 2: Teacher, follow-up interview

- Overall, how does this semester compare to other semesters of teaching writing? What have been some strengths? What have been some challenges?
- (Selecting a particular student draft from participants) Which of the comments that you made on this draft do you think are the most important, and why? Which of your comments do you feel are most strongly related to the learning purpose(s) of the assignment? If you were editing this draft for publication, how would your comments differ, do you think? What revisions were you expecting or/hoping for?
- How would you describe your relationship with student x (participant)?
- Where has that student grown in his/her writing?
- Where do you hope to see this student further develop
• If you could add in another assignment or lesson to the semester, what would it be and why?

**Interview 1 questions for students: Background about you**

**Past:**

• Tell me a little about you, where you grew up and what writing was like in high school.
• What kinds of comments have you had teachers make on your papers? How much are you used to? When do they give feedback to you (how?) How did you and how do you feel about your teacher’s feedback?
• Did you revise assignments? If so, which classes? Example?

**Present:**

• How many times do you revise, if at all on papers?
• Do you usually write and make changes on the computer or do you print out copies and make changes by hand? Why do you do this?
• Walk me through what you did for the last paper....
• Current paper and class: What do you think are going to be the 2 most important parts of this assignment?

**Interview questions for student interviews 2 and 3:**

• What comments from the teacher did you think about most as you revised?
• Which teacher comment do you think helped you the most in revising? Why?
• Why did you make this particular comment?
• How did adding the comments in make you feel?
• Re-reading your comments to the teacher’s comments, what do you notice about your response?
• How is this similar and/or different from having a face-to-face conference with the teacher?
• Was there any comment you didn’t understand? Did you make changes anyway or did you ignore the comment? Why?
• Did you make any other changes that weren’t related to a specific teacher comment? Why did you make those changes?

• How is this paper similar or different from the last paper you wrote?

**Interview questions for student interview four:**

• Overall, how does this semester compare to other semesters of taking writing classes? What have been some good points? What have been some challenges?

• How would you describe your relationship with your teacher? How has that helped or (not) your writing?

• If you could ask the teacher to change something he or she did, what would it be and why?

• What paper do you think you got the most useful comments on and why?

• I notice a pattern of ________ in your responses to teacher comments. Why do you think you do this when you read teacher comments?
APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

University of New Hampshire
Research Integrity Services, Service Building
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

15-Feb-2011

Kramer-Simpson, Elisabeth
English, Hamilton Smith Hall
611 Lead Ave. SW, #410
Albuquerque, NM 87102

IRB #: 5048
Study: Processing Feedback: How Students Interpret and Respond to Teacher Feedback in the Composition Classroom
Approval Date: 14-Feb-2011

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. (This document is also available at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julisシンプson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
Ortmeler, Christina
APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL LETTER 1 FROM UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
Main Campus Institutional Review Board
Human Research Protections Office
MSC08 9640
1 University of New Mexico-Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001
http://hr.unm.edu/om/research/IRBRC/

21-Feb-2011

Responsible Faculty: Elizabeth Kramer-Simpson
Investigator:
Dept. College: Valencia Faculty Development

SUBJECT: IRB Approval of Research - Modification
Protocol #: 12-013
Project Title: Processing Feedback: How students interpret and respond to teacher feedback in the composition classroom
Type of Review: Expedited Review
Approval Date: 16-Feb-2011
Expiration Date: 13-Feb-2012

The Main Campus Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. It has been approved based on the review of the following:

1. HRPO Application received 020711
2. Investigator Protocol received 020711
3. UNM consent form 020711
4. Gisting Questions received 020711

Consent Decision:
Requires a signed consent form.
HIPAA Authorization Addendum not applicable

If a consent is required, we have attached a date stamped consent that must be used for consenting participants during the above noted approval period.

If HIPAA authorization is required, the HIPAA authorization version noted above should be signed in conjunction with the consent form.

As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

- CONSENT: To ensure that ethical and legal informed consent has been obtained from all research participants.
- RENEWAL: To submit a progress report to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the end of the approval period in order for this study to be considered for continuation.
- ADVERSE EVENTS: To report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB immediately.
- MODIFICATIONS: To submit any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent forms, additions of...
subjects, or study design to the IRB as an Amendment for review and approval.

**COMPLETION.** To close your study when the study is concluded and all data has been de-identified (with no link to identifiers) by submitting a Closure Report.

Please reference the protocol number and study title in all documents and correspondence related to this protocol.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Tonzan, PhD
Chair
Main Campus IRB

*Signed the approval of this institutional review board (IRB). The Main Campus IRB has determined that the proposed changes adequate safeguards for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects involved in the study and is in accordance with 1999 regulations (45 CFR 46).*
APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL LETTER 2 FROM UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

THE UNIVERSITY of NEW MEXICO
Main Campus Institutional Review Board
Human Research Protections Office
MSC08 4560
1 University of New Mexico-Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001
http://hrp.unm.edu/research/IRB/

07-Feb-2012

Responsible Faculty: Danizete Martinez
Investigator:
Dept College: English Department

SUBJECT: IRB Approval of Research - Amendment
Protocol #: 11-015
Project Title: Processing Feedback: How students interpret and respond to teacher feedback in the composition classroom
Type of Review: Expedited Review
Approval Date: 07-Feb-2012
Expiration Date: 15-Feb-2013

The Main Campus Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. It has been approved based on the review of the following:

1. PI change from Elisabeth Kramer-Simpson to Danizete Martinez.

Consent Decision:
No changes.

If a consent is required, we have attached a date stamped consent that must be used for consenting participants during the above noted approval period.

If HIPAA authorization is required, the HIPAA authorization version noted above should be signed in conjunction with the consent form.

As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

• CONSENT: To ensure that ethical and legal informed consent has been obtained from all research participants.
• RENEWAL: To submit a progress report to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the end of the approval period in order for this study to be considered for continuation.
• ADVERSE EVENTS: To report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB immediately.
• MODIFICATIONS: To submit any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent assent forms, addition of subjects, or study design to the IRB as an Amendment for review and approval.
• COMPLETION: To close your study when the study is concluded and all data has been de-identified (with no link to identifiers) by submitting a Closure Report.
Please reference the protocol number and study title in all documents and correspondence related to this protocol.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Tomason, PhD
Chair
Main Campus IRB

* Please the provisions of the institution's Federal Policy Amendments (FPAs) (45 CFR 46), the Main Campus IRB has determined that this protocol provides adequate safeguards for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects involved in the study and is in compliance with 21 CFR Part 50, 46.
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
Main Campus Institutional Review Board
Human Research Protections Office
MSC06 4560
1 University of New Mexico-Albuquerque, NM 87131-0901
http://hro.um.edu/unm/research/IRBRC/

07-Feb-2012

Responsible Faculty: Danielle Martinez
Investigator:
Dept.College: Valencia Faculty Development

SUBJECT: IRB Approval of Research - Continuation
Protocol #: 11-015
Project Title: Processing Feedback: How students interpret and respond to teacher feedback in the composition classroom
Type of Review: Expedited Review
Approval Date: 07-Feb-2012
Expiration Date: 15-Feb-2013

The Main Campus Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. It has been approved based on the review of the following:
2. Investigator Protocol version 03/31/2011;
and acknowledgment of a UNH Approval Letter dated 02/15/2011.

Consent Decision:
Study is in data analysis phase only.

If a consent is required, we have attached a date stamped consent that must be used for consenting participants during the above noted approval period.
If HIPAA authorization is required, the HIPAA authorization version noted above should be signed in conjunction with the consent form.

As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:
• CONSENT. To ensure that ethical and legal informed consent has been obtained from all research participants.
• RENEWAL. To submit a progress report to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the end of the approval period in order for this study to be considered for continuation.
• ADVERSE EVENTS. To report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB immediately.
• MODIFICATIONS. To submit any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent-assent forms, addition of subjects, or study design to the IRB as an Amendment for review and approval.
COMPLETION. To close your study when the study is concluded and all data has been de-identified (with no link to identifiers) by submitting a Closure Report.

Please reference the protocol number and study title in all documents and correspondence related to this protocol.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Tomagno, PhD
Chair
Main Campus IRB

* I attest the provisions of the institutional Federal Policy Assurance (FWA) #00004921, the Main Campus IRB has determined that this proposal provides adequate safeguards for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects involved in the study and is in compliance with 45CFR46, etc.