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**A descriptive study of the process of superordination in  
community college writers**

Branscomb, H. Eric, Ph.D.

University of New Hampshire, 1987

**U·M·I**

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF SUPERORDINATION  
IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE WRITERS

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

May, 1987

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## ABSTRACT

### A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF SUPERORDINATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE WRITERS

by

H. Eric Branscomb  
University of New Hampshire, May, 1987

Using analyses of speak aloud writing protocols, this study describes the cognitive processes of community college writers as they use a series of drafts to derive superordinating statements about their experiences.

During the 1985-1986 school year, ten students from Northern Essex Community College volunteered to give a protocol as they completed a writing task. Five of the writers were from a Basic Writing course, and five were from advanced writing courses. The task asked them to generate details for and then draft narratives of three related personal experiences. Then the writers combined the three narratives into one draft, which ideally should have superordinated the narratives. Throughout the extended process protocols were taken.

Four primary conclusions came out of the study:

1. We do not need two models of the superordinating process--one for Basic Writers and one for advanced writers.



2. More sophisticated superordinations require keeping track of more data, and more data fosters more sophisticated superordinations.
3. The momentum provided by syntax helps generate details and conceptual names.
4. Discovery of new meaning after drafting is an exceedingly complex skill, more advanced than previously thought.

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Review of Literature 1: Cognition and Writing

I. Meaning-making

Depending on which perspective one views it from, writing may be seen as an act of social interaction, a tool for communication, or even an object of art, but of writing's many functions, the making of meaning--often an innovative meaning for the writer herself--is one of the most important. In such a context, writing becomes an instrument of cognition, an extension of the mind itself as it seeks to create new orders and new patterns. "Our manipulation of language shapes our conceptions of the world and of our selves," writes Ken Dowst (69) [emphasis in original]. He continues, "Such a view of language and knowledge suggests that writing can be an activity of great importance to the writer. While one in effect composes his or her world by engaging in any sort of language-using, it is by means of writing that one stands to learn the most."

Though "the most" perhaps overstates writing's value to the writer, Dowst's emphasis on "conception" is appropriate, for making meaning with language is essentially a matter of concept formation, of, in Jerome Bruner's phrase, "going beyond the information given" to the abstraction of similarities, patterns, or equivalences from experience, and

the naming of those patterns with conceptual words and syntax: superordinations. Creating generic categories out of the details of daily existence allows us to make "new and possibly fruitful predictions" (Bruner, "Beyond" 234) in order to guide our future decisions and activities. Many of these categories are coded linguistically, in concept words and phrases, but many others are in the saturated near-words ("pure meanings") of inner speech (Vygotsky, Thought 149) or in visual images.

Granted, certain rudimentary concepts operate instinctively, wordlessly--speeding trucks bearing down on us as we attempt to cross a street evoke not words such as "danger" but immediate activity. Furthermore, young children, in the process of assimilating and clarifying concepts provided by the culture, use abstract concept words which they have not induced for themselves. In learning the appropriate contexts and uses for a word, a child may circle about the concept, sometimes overabstracting ("you're a brat"), sometimes underabstracting (using "satellite" to refer only to artificial satellites, and being confused when learning that the moon also is a satellite), or misabstract (Don Murray has told me that, growing up in north Boston, he thought "nigger" referred to Italians). Thus cognition can operate making little or even no use of words. Yet language, especially written language, has the power to lead us individually and collectively to higher levels of

abstraction, to new levels of cognitive activity. Janet Emig explains, as a unique mode of learning, "Clear writing by definition is that writing which signals without ambiguity the nature of conceptual relationships, whether they be coordinate, subordinate, superordinate, causal, or something other" ("Mode" 127).

However, the relationship between writing and superordination is more complicated, for writing, indeed all superordination, depends as well on particularizing and specifying. James Moffett explains the need for both the concrete and the abstract in mature writing: "Mental growth, too, consists of two simultaneous progressions--toward differentiation and toward integration . . . as regards individual concepts and statements, growth is toward internal complexity and external relationship" (29). Writing that merely names some kind of superordination cannot be said to be mature, for, as Moffett warns, "a child frequently over-abstracts as well as under abstracts" (29). Mina Shaughnessy has noted the same tendency in her study of Basic Writers: "It is a mistake, in other words, to think that the problem for the student lies simply in learning to make more abstract statements rather than in developing greater play between abstract and concrete statements. The problem in most BW papers lies in the absence of movement between abstract and concrete statements. Papers tend to contain either cases or generalization but not both.

If anything, students seem to have more difficulty moving from abstract statements down to more concrete levels than they do moving up the ladder of abstraction" (240-241). At its best, writing helps us generate and convey new ideas in the form of concepts, but in addition it helps us elaborate those concepts. The elaboration of concepts, the disambiguation to which Emig refers, differentiating and precisely discriminating, is as important as actually generating the concepts. Unless a meaning-making writer finds "language fresh and exact enough to catch what is too personal for the stock phrases" supplied by the culture (Lindberg 144), she is at the mercy of a language system as repressive as Whorf imagined. Thus for the purposes of this study I define making meaning as forming (and re-forming), naming and elaborating concepts.

## II. Literacy, Orality, and Cognition

What role does writing play in the development of an individual's or a culture's cognitive growth? Though disputed by researchers such as Michael Cole, Sylvia Scribner, Shirley Brice Heath, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Brian Street, Thomas J. Farrell's summary of research by Walter Ong, Eric Havelock, and Jack Goody, that "Thinking in a highly oral culture is different from thinking in a literate culture" (31) has gained wide acceptance. And since individuals assimilate the forms of communication and habits

of thought characteristic of the culture to which they belong, the cognitive processes of individuals in an oral culture are different from those of individuals in a literate culture. "Human thought structures are tied in with verbalization and must fit available media of communication. There is no way for persons with no experience of writing to put their minds through the continuous linear sequence of thought such as goes, for example, into an encyclopedia article" (Ong, Rhetoric 2).

To Ong, "literate" and "oral" are polar concepts referring to the primary medium of communication of the culture or subculture. Most actual cultures, of course, fall somewhere in the spectrum between the poles. Pure, "primary" oral cultures existed in human history in preliterate Greece and exist today in certain isolated third world cultures. These are cultures with no exposure to written language at all. Residual oral cultures, such as certain urban ghettos of the United States or England, are cultures that have been exposed to writing but have predominant oral forms of communication and thought.

The characteristics of thought in oral cultures are, according to Ong (Interfaces 102), stereotyped or formulaic expression, standardized themes, epithetic identification of individuals, ceremonial appropriation of history, cultivation of praise and vituperation, and copiousness. James A. Notopoulos (qtd. in Farrell, 33) adds that oral

composing is "paratactic, inorganic, flexible, responsive to the live audience, digressive, and more concerned with parts than with wholes." Written composition, in contrast, is "hypotactic, organic, logical, and concerned with relating parts to one another to achieve a related whole" (Farrell, 33). British sociologist Basil Bernstein, working from a different model from Ong's literary/historical model, noting significant differences in the language "codes" used by working class and upper class British subcultures, identifies the categories of "restricted" (context-bound, particularistic, concrete, symbolically condensed) and "elaborated" (autonomous, universalistic, abstract, symbolically articulated) codes. Bernstein's codes correspond almost exactly to Ong's literate and oral modes. Anthropologist Patricia Greenfield and psychologist Jerome Bruner, reporting on a study of cognitive growth in literate and oral African tribes, note that the context-free nature of written languages such as French cultivates the process of concept-formation (Greenfield and Bruner, 103). Even Piaget, who for much of his career insisted that attainment of formal operations was a universal and therefore independent of cultural factors, admitted late in his career, after reviewing studies of populations other than the "privileged" one of Geneva (e. g. illiterates from Iranian villages), that "When it comes to formal thought, we could propose that there will be even greater retardation in

its formation . . .; or that perhaps in extremely disadvantaged conditions, such a type of thought will never really take shape" (7).

A clear picture of the relationship of writing and cognition begins to appear: literacy (and hence writing) facilitates, indeed enables, certain cognitive processes which are unavailable to individuals unacquainted with writing. Writing which uses these unique cognitive processes may be predicted to be elaborated (thus more context-free and audience-independent), to move easily between the abstract and the concrete, to be packed with its own meanings, and to be structurally hypotactic (i.e., clearly denoting relationships between its parts with subordinate and superordinate syntax). The concepts formed in mature writing will be both more abstract and more explicitly defined by their particulars. Generalizations in the form of received commonplaces will be few and either examined carefully or modified in the context of particular instances which seem to contradict. Writing will be fully differentiated from speech.

While nearly every researcher in the field recognizes the value of orality (immediacy of thought and language, closeness to the subject and the audience, preservation of social values and structures) and the hazards of literacy (distancing of self from experience, of thought from



feeling, of self from other; in general, the malaise now beginning to be recognized in this century as "alienation"), some researchers have gone further to question, and in one case even to reject, the polarization of cultures and cognitive patterns into oral and literate. Anne Ruggles Gere, while accepting in general the distinctions of literate and oral, notes the need for a clear and unambiguous definition of "literate," and concludes with a reminder that "commonsense knowledge and the oral facility . . . complement and enrich literacy" (123). Shirley Brice Heath's landmark study of literacy and language use in two Piedmont cultures states more strongly the interpenetration of oral and literate traditions:

It is impossible to characterize Trackton and Roadville [the pseudonyms of the two towns of her study] with existing descriptions of either the oral or literate traditions: they are neither and they are both. (231)

Scribner and Cole's work with the Vai tribe in Africa, a tribe which possesses a written code that is learned without benefit of schooling, suggests that the true determining variable is formal education rather than literacy, for the literate but uneducated Vai performed no better on certain cognitive tasks than did other non-literate, uneducated groups. It is thus, according to Scribner and Cole, formal education, with its emphasis on

systems of logic, that accounts for the differences in cognition usually ascribed to literacy.

And the most thorough rejection of the literate/non-literate conceptualization comes from Brian Street, who in his book Literacy in Theory and Practice uses his research in nonliterate Iranian cultures to refute Greenfield, Goody, and Olson on political, economic, and ideological grounds. "The skills and concepts that accompany literacy acquisition," he posits, "do not stem in some automatic way from the inherent qualities of literacy, as some authors would have us believe, but are aspects of a specific ideology" (1). The cognitive skills traditionally associated with literacy, such as elaboration, are mere conventions of a particular cultural context, and when Western observers don't find evidence of adherence to Western conventions, they label the culture under study "cognitively deficient" or some other value laden term. All humans abstract; all humans elaborate when the social context requires it. "The anthropological evidence, then, suggests that there is scientific and non-scientific [i.e. literate and oral] thought in all societies and within all individuals" (26).

Most of the objections to the explicit link between literacy and cognition, then, are answered in principle by Ong's "residual oral" intermediate category--an express awareness that no culture or individual is completely oral

or completely literate. Heath's work further defines and clarifies the interactions of literacy and orality in a social context, providing gradations and internal complexities within the "residual oral" category without actually rejecting the concepts of literacy and orality themselves. Street's rejoinders about social context should force literacy researchers to examine more carefully their own ethnocentricities, but claiming that non-literate tribes are the cognitive equal of Western academics and that worldwide literacy programs are plots by hegemonic capitalists to increase profits seems counterproductive, the stuff of baby-bathwater mentalities. Does Street really believe that, Western conventions of essay structure and book structure aside, that non-literate cultures are capable of generating, within any set of discourse conventions, the insight, the extensive classifications of behavior, the predictions about future activity, the careful tabulation of detailed thought, represented by Ways with Words or Literacy in Theory and Practice?

More pragmatically, and more to the point of this study which is admittedly within the context of Western academic language and conventions, David Olson has concluded, "Written language, the language of schooling, is an instrument of great power for building an abstract and coherent theory of reality. It is the development of this explicit formal system which accounts for the predominant

features of Western culture and for the distinctive properties of the cognitive processes of educated adults" ("Oral and Written" 24).

### III. Process and Growth

"In written speech," writes the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, "communication must be achieved through words and their combination . . . hence the use of first drafts. The evolution from the draft to the final copy reflects our mental process." However, at his early death in 1934 he left only sketches and outlines of the work he was engaged in, leaving for later researchers the tasks of describing and understanding the "mental processes" involved in writing.

In chapter 5 of Thought and Language, "An Experimental Model of Concept Formation," Vygotsky outlines the results of studies conducted with young children as they are asked to find patterns and similarities in a series of blocks. Vygotsky identifies three major stages of development in a child's skill at arranging the blocks into logical conceptual categories: heaps, complexes, and true concepts. He further breaks down the intermediate "complex" stage into associations, collections, chains, diffuse complexes, and pseudo-concepts.

The first stage, heaps, the most rudimentary, is an almost random grouping of the blocks: whatever catches the

child's eye is included in the group. Complexes are formed as the child begins to notice real concrete similarities: color, shape, size, etc. The first stage of complex formation is "association": given one central block to start with and asked to group around it others similar, a child will use varying concrete criteria for grouping: a red, thin triangle will have associated with it red blocks, thin blocks, and triangular blocks, so that the resultant grouping is related only in its having one similarity to the center block. A collection complex is best described by an example from Applebee (1978): given a spoon, a child will group around it a fork and a knife, showing an awareness of concrete functions, even though the superordinating concept "eating utensil" is not verbalized at this stage.

The next stage of complexes is the "chain"; a child gathers together a group of objects whose only relationship is a single concrete similarity to the object previously chosen. A thin red triangle is followed by a thick red rectangle, followed by a green rectangle, followed by a green square, etc. The chain complex is, as Applebee describes it, a snake whose head bears little resemblance to its tail. Similar to the chain is the "diffuse complex": the paired groupings are made solely on impressionistic criteria rather than concrete or logical similarities. The final, most advanced, stage is the pseudo-concept, a grouping which is both chained (using a single criterion

throughout) and centered. It appears to give the same grouping as a true concept would; however the criteria for grouping are still concrete: "all three sided figures" rather than the more abstract "figures possessing the quality of triangularity."

The pseudo-concept is transitional in a child's cognitive development--it bridges the gap between concrete complexes and the true concept. The true concept is both chained and centered, but the center and the criteria for chaining are both abstract and conceptual rather than concrete. At this point the child is aware of function and has attained a concept.

Applebee has discovered in his study of children's stories that children follow much the same developmental pattern in their progress toward a true concept of narrative form. When asked to tell a story, the children in Applebee's study responded with narratives of varying complexity, which Applebee was able to correlate with Vygotsky's stages of concept-formation. Children first tell almost non-stories--Applebee, following Vygotsky, calls them "heaps": loosely organized groupings of information with no real narrative pattern. Sowers has also noticed this very early stage of children's composing behavior, citing children's preference for non-narrative modes of discourse before the narrative. Children then proceed through Sequences (=Vygotsky's associations), Primitive Narratives

(=collections), Unfocused Chains (=chains), and Focused Chains (=pseudo-concepts).

Finally children's narratives show evidence of being focused on an abstract central idea and chained by an abstract concept of functional complementarity. These are Narratives to Applebee, equivalent to Vygotsky's true concept stage. Applebee continues by noting that once achieved, true narratives can be treated as chunks and themselves combined, like Vygotsky's blocks, in longer narratives through a new, cognitively advanced development from heaps of narratives to narratives grouped within a true concept. This grouping of narratives will proceed through the same stages of concept-formation. It is this suggestion of nesting of narratives that provides the underlying paradigm for this study, although the grouping of narratives is done in an expository mode rather than a fictional or narrative mode.

Relying extensively on Vygotsky (with nods towards Piaget and Bruner also), James Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse is in many ways the first real attempt at an extensive analysis of the link between writing and cognition. Moffett develops a scale of cognitive growth in writing, perhaps more theoretically than empirically, which covers a range of writing from, as he puts it, inner worlds to outer worlds, from the concrete and immediate to the abstract and theoretical. His four categories on the scale

are Record, an immediate account of action in progress; Report, an after the fact account; Generalizing, seeing patterns and repetitions in the immediate sensory data; and Theorizing, constructing logical hypotheses about the future. The scale thus moves from the concrete to the abstract, and it is this general notion, based on the gradual decentering of the writer as he matures, that informs most work on cognition and writing today. Both Britton and Wilkinson refine the scale, and Sowers refutes Moffett's explicit link between narrative reporting and generalizing, but in general Moffett's work, drawing from three of the most influential cognitive psychologists of this century, is the foundation for later studies of writing and cognition.

The work of Britton's Schools Council Project has also been influential in shaping our awareness of cognitive growth in writing. This project examined over 2000 actual pieces of school writing by children aged 11 to 18 from two perspectives: the writer's relationship to his audience and the writer's increasing sense of the function of his writing. Responding to the writing holistically, Britton developed two function categories, the poetic and the transactional. The transactional is further broken down into the conative (giving directions, making requests, etc.) and the informative. The informative is then subdivided into Record, Report, Generalized Narrative, Analogic/Low



Level of Generalization, Analogic, Analogic - Tautologic, and Tautologic. The parallel with Moffett's scheme of concrete to abstract is apparent. Each of Britton's informative categories represents a step away from immediate experience, providing a measure of the writer's ability to abstract from the concrete. Britton's work does not deal explicitly with cognitive processes, yet it does provide a refinement of Moffett's scale of cognitive growth in writing.

The other major study of cognition and writing is Wilkinson et al., Assessing Language Development (1980). The Wilkinson team assesses specifically writing development along four different tracks: the Affective, the Moral, the Stylistic, and the Cognitive. Once again Moffett's scheme underlies Wilkinson's cognitive scale, but Wilkinson expands and refines the scheme to provide twenty-one gradations from Labelling (the lowest step of Describing) to Theorizing, the most advanced stage of Speculating. Wilkinson's intent is to provide an instrument sensitive enough to categorize every statement in a piece of writing, going beyond Moffett and Britton's strictly holistic overview categories. In his concern for completeness, however, Wilkinson may have provided more categories than can be used profitably, making distinctions that do not seem to elucidate the writer's cognitive growth. What, for example, is the difference between Inferring and Deducing? The scale is cumbersome and

impossible to replicate reliably, since the categories aren't clearly distinguished. Yet Wilkinson's study, because it is rooted in evidence and observation rather than speculation or a priori categories, is useful, and with clearer definition of each subcategory the scale may be a useful tool for future researchers.

One interesting note on Wilkinson's cognitive scale: at the low, concrete describer level of cognition, Wilkinson implicitly recognizes that elaboration is a more advanced skill than generalizing, for his lowest level is Labelling, defined as "the mere concept word," while the next step is Naming, "the specific word, e.g. 'Mr. Jones.'"

Research (and the current theoretical models it has spawned) thus suggests that cognitive growth in writing is an increased ability to generate abstractions, generalizations, and hypotheses in writing, and to elaborate those higher-order statements with related concrete data, and that through drafting such growth follows a path suggested by Vygotsky from unrelated heaps of information to true concepts, made explicit in writing.

#### Review of Research 2: Protocol Analysis

It's not coincidental that the early pedagogical movement from product to process in writing instruction should have been accompanied by a simultaneous shift in research methodologies to understand a writer's process of

writing. One of the most useful methods, protocol analysis, was borrowed from psychological research where it had a long history in providing insight into thinking processes. Protocol analysis was first used to study writing processes in Janet Emig's 1965 study The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, roughly the same time as the emphasis on process in writing sprang up.

In general, a protocol is simply a "sequential record of a subject's attempts to perform a task" (Swarts et al. 53), and may include simply recording externally observable behavior. In current use, however, the term "protocol" normally refers to a "think-aloud protocol," a concurrent verbal report of thoughts spoken by the subject while writing. "In a thinking aloud writing protocol, the subject works in an experimental room with a desk, writing materials, and a cassette tape recorder and a tape (see Bond and Hayes, 1980). The...subject is told 'The most important thing about this experiment is that we want you to say everything out loud as you are thinking and writing your essay'" (Swarts et al. 54). The tape recorded protocols are then transcribed and analyzed according to the particular coding scheme the researcher has devised. As used in writing research, protocol analysis is a type of "level 4" inquiry in Bereiter and Scardamalia's classificatory scheme, a "search for lawfulness and pattern in the writer's thoughts while composing" (12).

The most influential and insistent proponents of protocol analysis have been Linda Flower and John R. Hayes of Carnegie Mellon University. Beginning with Flower's "Writer- Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing" in 1979, the Flower and Hayes team has extended and refined the method more than any other researchers of, affording us more microscopic views of the cognitive processes which produce a piece of writing. To those who have previously criticized composition research as on one hand subjective and unscientific or on the other dealing with products rather than mental processes, Flower and Hayes's research begins to legitimize composition as a field of inquiry with established research techniques, a theoretical model to guide further research, and a growing body of empirically derived data.

Since the initial publication and succeeding popularity of Flower and Hayes' work with think-aloud protocols, however, many new objections to the method have arisen. Hayes and Flower ("Uncovering") summarize these objections as follows:

1. Such reports are not valid because people are not conscious of their cognitive processes.
2. Even if people were aware of their cognitive processes, reporting them verbally would distort them.
3. Verbal reports are incomplete.

4. Verbal reports are not objective and, therefore, cannot be used as scientific data. (213)

In response to the first two of these objections, Hayes and Flower cite research by Nisbett and Wilson, reviewed and modified by Ericsson and Simon, to show that unless the participants are required to report information they normally would not attend to, the reports are undistorted (except possibly slower) and in fact do reveal more about the processes occurring than the participants are consciously aware of. For the fourth, while it's true that as statements of objective fact, the participants' reports are not objectively reliable, but the reports are themselves objects, and as such are subject to analysis. Objections to protocol analysis, explain Bereiter and Scardamalia, "fail to take into account the difference between testimony and data. Writers' verbal reports should not be taken as presenting a picture of the composing process . . . . Rather they should be taken as data that the investigator uses, often in conjunction with other data, in constructing a description of the inferred processes" (13).

To the third objection, Hayes and Flower simply agree: "In fact, they are incomplete . . . . [P]rotocols are characteristically more complete than most of the other methods with which they are compared" (216-217). Bereiter and Scardamalia add, "The issue, however, is not whether they are perfect but whether they lead to better process

descriptions than can be produced without such data" (13). As with any research technique, the result is a body of inferences; but in the case of protocol analysis, the inferences are based upon data--the writer's verbalized thoughts--that are closer to the process being studied than are the written products.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

#### I. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the cognitive processes of writers as they use a series of written drafts to make and refine superordinating inferences about their experiences.

I will primarily consider the following questions:

1. How are abstractions, generalizations and hypotheses (i.e., superordinations) generated and altered in writing?
2. In what ways is the process of generation and refinement different for different levels of writers?

#### II. The Pilot Studies

During the spring and early summer of 1985 I conducted pilot studies with six students, both to refine my skills as a researcher and to try out different methods of data gathering. For the first round with two writers, I collected protocols, that is, after explaining the writing task I instructed the writers to speak their thoughts while writing into a tape recorder, while I was out of the room, on the hypothesis that my presence would be an unnatural, inhibiting factor. At the end of each protocol session I conducted extensive retrospective interviews with the

writers, asking them pointed questions about their writing and their processes.

Two potential problems were uncovered in the first round: extreme reluctance on the part of one subject to vocalize during the protocol sessions, and the possibility of researcher intervention (during the retrospective interviews) leading the subjects and thus skewing the results.

For the second round, I tested three adapted methods of gathering data: For the first, after I explained the task, I asked two writers to complete a detailed questionnaire regarding the generation of their writing at three points during the writing process; for the second, a Basic Writer, I collected a protocol while I remained present, and conducted no retrospective interviews; for the third, again using the protocol method with me present, I used the first session as a training session, in which the writer practiced giving a protocol, the actual research beginning with the second session. With this pilot also, I conducted no retrospective interviews.

In the second round the first two writers responded to a three part questionnaire during the composition of the paper: questions immediately after prewriting, questions after completing the three rough drafts, and questions upon completion of the draft which combined the three narratives into one paper.



This type of retrospective view of one's own writing process demands a specialized ability not found in most college freshmen; for unlike the protocol, which is a document for analysis by the researcher, the retrospective questionnaire demands that the subject himself understand and verbalize coherently what he's doing. The answers given by both writers were disappointingly short; on the second questionnaire, for example, covering the three narrative drafts, to two of the seven questions intended to elicit an extensive response, one writer answered simply "no." On a few of the questions there was the hint of some emerging insights that an oral questioning could have uncovered, but the limitations of this carefully controlled method precluded such intervention.

Despite the obvious strength of the questionnaire method of data gathering--the control it offers the researcher and the unlikelihood of "leading" the writer to insights he wouldn't have discovered through his own writing process--I found the paucity of data generated makes the method generally unsuitable for this research.

For the third pilot, I discovered that my presence during the protocol was no hindrance, and (provided my interventions were inconspicuous, non-judgmental, and non-committal) did not redirect the writer's attention or energies. For the final pilot, I added a protocol training session. The results: first, the training seemed to help,

both with loosening up the subject and beginning to build a bond of trust and knowledge between subject and myself as researcher, and with introducing the notion of think-aloud protocols in a non-threatening situation. And second, once again the continuous presence of the researcher did not disturb the writing process significantly.

#### Final Conclusions: Research Methodology

Based on the six pilot studies, I found the method that held the most promise for providing some answers to the research question was the one I used with the final writer: an introductory training session, followed by protocol sessions with me present, gently and unobtrusively asking non-leading questions or even simply making observations and noting the response, if any.

This method offered the following advantages:

1. The protocols actually taken are rich in information.
2. During the training session I have the opportunity to build an open, trusting relationship with the writer, as well as allay many of the extraneous fears about this type of research. The writer has a chance to experience the giving of a protocol without the added pressure of having it "count."
3. My continuous presence, rather than being a distraction or uncontrolled variable, is more often

an aid to gathering data. Especially for writers unexpressive by nature, a few gentle reassurances or encouraging observations ("You're doing fine; I'm interested in seeing what you do next.") serve to generate data without influencing the data generated. Once, during a pause in the sixth writer's drafting, I non-committally observed, "You've paused." She took the opportunity to verbalize her thoughts at that moment, which she probably would have forgotten to do otherwise. The initial discomfort of the writer with me present can be overcome by the training session and the adoption of an encouraging and supportive atmosphere by me during the actual protocol sessions.

4. Should the writer lapse into silence, either through forgetting or discomfort with the conditions, I can take immediate action to encourage him to resume the protocol, whatever seems to be needed.

### III. Subjects

For the study I recruited ten students, five inexperienced writers and five more advanced writers, from classes at Northern Essex Community College during the fall and spring terms, 1985-1986. I chose these two populations to represent the widest range of abilities found in a

community college setting, under the assumption that each group would act as a foil for the other, highlighting and emphasizing the contrasts between the two, each providing a context for interpreting the processes of the other. I asked instructors from various beginning and advanced writing courses to recommend to me students from their classes who they thought would be appropriate (either "typical" Basic Writers or "noticeably superior, not just A-level" advanced writers). I interviewed the recommended students, one at a time, on a first-come-first-serve basis, explaining the project to them and asking for volunteers. When I had five volunteers from each level, I stopped interviewing, though I retained the names of the other recommended students for backups. (In fact, four writers did eventually drop out of the study, so I did need four replacements.) At no time did I consciously select one writer over another. The resulting group consisted of one male and nine females.

Participating writers were paid a \$25.00 honorarium, and all signed permission forms to allow me to record and refer to their work in the study.

The inexperienced writers were drawn from students assigned to Basic Writing classes at Northern Essex. All five Basic Writers had been placed in the Basic Writing course as a result of the college's mandated 45 minute writing sample given either prior to the start of the

semester or during the first day of classes. Students who show a marked weakness, as judged holistically by a team of English Department readers, in either "development of ideas" or "sentence structure" (i.e. mechanical conventions of written English) are "strongly urged" to enroll in Basic Writing before attempting freshman composition. The placement is, legally speaking, merely a "recommendation," since the college, as an open admissions school, cannot require Basic Writing. Practically speaking, however, the recommendation is treated as almost a requirement.

The more experienced writers were drawn from the college's advanced writing courses, either Composition II (a second semester college level writing/intro to literature course), Technical Writing, or Creative Writing. All five advanced writers had of course passed the writing sample for admission to Composition I in an earlier semester, and all received an A when they took English Composition I.

On the average the advanced writers were significantly older than the Basic Writers, with an average age of 30; four of the Basic Writers were 18-19 year old students right out of high school. All the writers had either graduated from high school or received a GED, and only one had graduated from a high school outside the Merrimack Valley. In general, the advanced writers reported more writing and reading in high school, and received more support from their family for their academic endeavors. One, however, despised

her high school English curriculum, though she read fifteen books per week while growing up. The Basic Writers, on the other hand, reported less success, less interest, and less actual reading and writing in their high school English courses. Interestingly, there seemed to be no pattern regarding the home-life literacy environment: Some of the Basic Writers reported a homes full of books and magazines, eagerly read by parents and siblings; and some of the advanced writers reported a lack of reading and writing in their home environments. Reading scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test were available for 2 of the participants, both Basic Writers: one scored in the 2nd stanine and one in the third stanine on the comprehension components; both were recommended by the college for developmental reading courses.

#### IV. The Task

I chose the writing task because of its cognitive difficulty and because, through experience with it, I had noticed a wide variation in the performance of students on its generating and synthesizing demands.

The task is the seventh writing assignment in the sequence of assignments for the Northern Essex Basic Writing course: an "association paper." It is roughly an adaptation of Task 17 in the textbook One to One, by Dawe and Dornan,

clarified, simplified, and more highly structured for Basic Writers.

Students are asked to begin with "a person, place, object or idea" that over a period of time has been significant in their lives. This became known, in an early analysis of the data, as the "center." From this center, students are asked to generate ten "one-time" experiences associated in their own minds with the center. Instructions at this point in the process are intentionally left vague and open ended, allowing students as much freedom as possible, under the assumption that what they generate on their own will be more significant than what they generate under intense guidance by an instructor or researcher.

From these ten experiences, students choose three that "seem most related" and begin prewriting separate narratives of those three by making lists of specific details. (All Basic Writing students are familiar with list-making as a heuristic.) From each list they write a narrative of the experience and revise it, thus producing three narratives. The writer then incorporates the narratives into a longer essay that attempts to present the experiences and effectively draw some kind of superordinating inference about the unity and meaning of the experiences.

#### V. The Protocol Format

Each of the ten writers was set up, usually in an empty classroom on the Northern Essex campus, at a table with room to write. A microphone sat in front of the writer. I sat off to the side of the writer, making observational notes as well as operating the tape recorder. The writer knew I was present, but I was mostly out of view and thus as unobtrusive as possible. I could still observe and, on infrequent occasions, intervene, but not disturb the writing taking place.

I used 90-minute cassette tapes, since forty five minutes seemed to be the most time we could squeeze out of the students' free periods between classes. Longer, 120-minute, tapes also tended to fail in the pilot sessions. Occasionally, especially with the night school students, we could do a double session. Writers took on the average six forty five minute sessions, the fewest being four and the most being 11.

Following the format I had decided upon following the pilot studies, I actually began gathering data for each writer in the second session, the first session being reserved for training. I explained the procedures to the writer, got to know her better, trying to sense the source any nervousness or apprehension on her part, and tried to allay any worries. Then I had her give a practice protocol while writing a brief essay on the topic "Describe your Neighborhood." From this I could spot any problems, such as



not talking or talking inaudibly so the microphone couldn't pick it up, and try to correct them. This also gave the writer a chance to practice giving a protocol (an inherently self-conscious act) in a pressure-free situation. After the practice, I discussed with the writer how she felt and how she evaluated her performance. I offered suggestions, both for relaxing and for improving the performance, where necessary. I was always encouraging.

During the protocol sessions, my intention was to intervene as little as possible, to avoid leading the writer to inferences or generalizations she wouldn't have discovered on her own. I tried to keep most of my comments neutral, offering the writer the opportunity to expand further if she desired. On the rare occasion when I did intervene, I merely repeated a word or phrase or made an observation: "You've paused." Or "You say your father spanked you." Questions such as "Why did you write that?" call for more knowledge than the writer is aware of, and ask her to draw a conclusion for me, so answers to such questions tend not to be reliable. Additionally, if I expressed extra interest in a particular part of the writing, the writer could very well get the impression that the object of my interest is more important, and concentrate on it more than she otherwise would have, so such questions could actually have skewed the results.

When I actually explained the writing task to the participants, I began by telling them that they would be writing three separate stories, and later they would combine the three into one long paper with one main point. I told them they would have a worksheet to complete, and gave it to them, going through each section carefully. After I explained the "center," the person, place, object, or idea which they would use to begin generating experiences, I told them they would be jotting down ten experiences to build up a pool of experiences to choose from. Both during this preliminary overview and later at the actual point of selection, I emphasized that the choice of these three probably should be made by a "gut feeling," a vague, unnamed feeling that these three "go together somehow." They should "sense" a relationship, but, I explained, "you don't have to know exactly what it is right now." I asked if they were familiar with the concept of "prewriting." If not, I explained the idea of brainstorming details in a list. If they were (all the Basic Writers were, and most of the advanced ones were), I told them they would make three separate lists, one for each experience, then write three separate rough drafts, and finally combine all three into one paper, which clearly told what the main point of this combined paper was. I told them they would have as much time as they needed for this, and that they should probably count on roughly two weeks' commitment to it.

The design of this protocol study seems to be unique because it actually follows a writer from the beginning to the end of an extended writing task. Most protocol studies to date have been limited to one drafting session, and as such have not allowed the researcher to observe the full process of meaning-making, which always occurs over an extended time period. Often such studies have a particular focus, such as revision or drafting, but such a narrow focus isolates the behavior being observed from the larger context of the full writing situation in which it would occur. If, for example, a cognitive move made during prewriting affects the revision process, the narrowly focused study will be unable to account satisfactorily for the deflected revision. (Granted, even the type of study I'm performing fails to take into account the much larger cultural and ethnographic context of the writing, but the protocol technique does provide insight into private cognitive processes that studies using larger ethnographic, naturalistic contexts must only guess at.)

Studies such as Perl's show that even the weakest writers follow a process similar to the professional model of recursive prewriting, drafting, and revising, but for most writers these subprocesses are not visible or isolable. By clearly opening up the subprocesses for observation, this writing task allows me to observe the entire process, start

to finish, including the interrelationships of the subprocesses.

Furthermore, one-shot studies observe the writer under examination-like conditions, and sometimes place debilitating pressures on the writer. The researcher feels the pressure to swoop in, quickly collect masses of significant data, and escape. The writer being thus studied cannot feel natural or comfortable, so her natural writing processes are disrupted and the data may be skewed.

#### VI. Reliability

Since one of the major focuses of the study is to explain the genesis of a writer's superordinating statements, it is necessary for me to have a reliable identification of the major superordination of each of the ten papers. For this purpose I gathered a team of three readers, myself and two other experienced writing teachers from the faculty of Northern Essex. For each of the ten papers each reader identified the primary superordination. In seven out of the ten cases, all three readers agreed unanimously; for the other three cases, two out of three agreed and their agreed-upon superordination was taken as the primary one. These ten are the basis of the analysis in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

#### VII. Analysis of Data

Even though the study is open-ended, seeking to describe and understand rather than prove, it is nevertheless focused enough that the protocols do not need to be coded in the manner of Perl, with every major activity noted. Instead, the data analysis focuses only on the superordinations: the processes involved in generating and refining them, and the actual products. Chapter 4 narrates the generation of each of the ten writers' superordinations, using a case history format. Chapter 5 analyzes the superordinations themselves, and chapter 6 seeks to make some generalizations about the processes involved in superordinating.

#### 1. The Products

The first analysis is of the concept names used by the writers--the nature of the individual concept-words that the writers choose to represent the area of experience they are addressing in their pieces. After that, building on the names, I look at the actual form the superordinations take, establishing a taxonomy of five types. Next I investigate the content and scope of the superordinations, charting the amount of experience mapped out by each one, and note patterns of overgeneralizing and undergeneralizing, following Moffett in seeing both as evidence of transition, cognitively, towards a perfect match of the superordination's level of generality and the experience being treated.

For this chapter also I investigate the responses of readers to superordinations. I surveyed eleven English teachers, asking them to identify each of the ten superordinations as having been produced by either a Basic Writer or an advanced writer, responding to the complexity and function of each and trying to identify the features that affected their decisions (see appendix 2). For the survey, I corrected the grammar, spelling, and punctuation of the superordinations, typed them to eliminate handwriting as a basis for judgment, and changed other details to protect the anonymity of the writers. I then analyze the ways in which readers respond to superordinating statements--what they look for and how the superordinations affect them.

## 2. The Process

Analyzing the process involves reading the protocols and the written products, looking for surfacings of the superordination or a part of it. For each writer, I chart the first appearance of the concept and identify four major juncture points during the process at which the superordinations first occur. I call these the "eureka" moments. I then look at the changing bonds between the three narratives, as the conceptual relationships between them grow clearer and more elaborated--how the ten are generated, how the three are chosen, and how the lists and drafts grow. I identify the major strategies the writers

use to choose their three, and parallel those strategies with Vygotsky's methods of complex and concept formation.

Finally, I look at the what the writers do as they shape and reshape their superordinations, where the concept names come from and the role of syntax in generating and explicating the relationships discovered in the writing.

Chapter 7 then synthesizes the results from chapters 3-6, making inferences and suggesting hypotheses about protocol analysis, the superordinating process in writing, and further research in the area.

### CHAPTER 3

#### CASE NARRATIVES

Within the template of the experimental writing task, each of the writers who participated in the study had her own unique writing process, and each reacted differently to the demands of the protocol situation. One spoke very little; one blurted out 88 pages of typed transcript. One would have finished the entire paper in a breathless let's-get-it-over-with two hour session had I not suggested we return for a second session; another spent 12 hourly sessions spread out over a month to complete the task. The one male voiced more than I had expected, yet in sotto voce tones that were very difficult to decipher on tape. And in fact, writers even reacted differently from day to day, affected by the weather, the nearness to a Monday or a Friday, and the point they were in their writing process.

The following are condensed narratives of each writer's encounter with the writing task and the experimental situation.

#### Pam

Pam is a single parent in her early 30's, taking Basic Writing during the fall 1985 semester. She and her three children live in half a duplex with other members of her extended family--fifteen people all together. When she



begins the protocol sessions she is without transportation home so she is walking from school to her home in the next town--a distance of about six miles.

She is open and friendly, and from the start shows little nervousness with the whole experimental situation. She is a willing and enthusiastic participant, and owing to her ability to verbalize her innermost thoughts almost reflexively, without prior reflection, she is an ideal subject for a protocol. Her four protocol sessions occur between October 24 and October 31, 1985.

She says of her own writing process that she always writes a rough draft then goes back to add in material. When drafting she consults her list frequently, and at the completion of each rough draft she compares it with her list, going down the list detail by detail and checking off each one she's used in the draft.

At the first session she begins her task quickly, with little reflection or worry about the topic. She chooses to write about her daughter Terri, and immediately begins listing possible experiences. She picks her three experiences with little hesitation, noting offhandedly that "they all have the same meaning: she got hurt."

She lists steadily, not at a breakneck pace but with few protracted pauses. Once her lists begin to take on some substance, she works on all three simultaneously, moving back and forth, adding details to one then the other. As

she writes "x-rays" on list #2 she is reminded of "shots" to add to list #1. At one point during drafting she writes a note to herself in the margin--thinking about revising already. At the beginning of one draft she writes "This Terri . . ." though speaks "This is when Terri . . ." The discrepancy goes unnoticed, to be corrected during revising and editing.

When drafting she pauses after substantial writing bursts to reread and check off details from her list. At the completion of a draft, she scans each paragraph looking for answers to the 5 W's. If she finds that she has included information answering those questions, she is satisfied that the draft is completed, and begins the next one.

At the beginning of the third draft, she says "This experience is more recent," implying that the details of the experience should be more accessible. However, this draft is the shortest, least detailed of the three.

By the beginning of the third protocol session, Pam is ready to connect the three narratives. She starts in immediately, with no rereading of the drafts and no reflection on what she's to be doing. She starts with a title that passes for her controlling generalization--"Three My Daught has had with Haspital," adding in "expicecies" between "three" and "my" after rereading. She comments, apparently not completely satisfied with the title, that she

"can change it at the end." She begins writing immediately, with her rough draft in front of her. "This paper is about my daughte Terri Jean exspecinut with haspital." She crosses out "paper" and writes "storey" above, and underlines "exspecinut," saying that it's misspelled. She continues, a new paragraph: "it was only three time, all happen on a Tuesday." Here is the highest form of generalization she produces--a fairly concrete statement which links the experiences merely by counting them. The only abstraction is "hospital," since the institution was different in each experience.

During the narrative parts of the combined draft, which are pretty much verbatim from the three separate drafts, when she composes a sentence in the revised draft that is different from the one in the rough draft, she returns to the rough draft to also make the change there. The resultant copy of the rough draft appears to show evidence of extensive revision--crossouts, insertions, arrows, etc. In fact the revisions occurred spontaneously during the composing of the revised draft, rather than being calculated during a reading of the drafts. The marked-up draft is thus a record of changes made rather than the changes themselves. She completes the combined draft, four handwritten pages, in the one hour protocol session, and says she's done.

She returns two days later for a final session. She begins rereading, pencil in hand, this time with actual

revision taking place on the draft rather than during redrafting. Her major concern is with veracity, accuracy of detail, and completeness of narrative. When finished, she announces positively that it's done, though, like Hamlet, she continues to think and talk and mark on the draft. She remarks on the brevity of the finished draft: "I could have added a lot more, but I didn't want to make it boring."

### Lisa

Lisa was enrolled in the Basic Writing class for the fall semester, 1985. A willing and enthusiastic participant from the start, she completed the task in five sessions, from October 28 through November 7. Originally she was the sixth Basic Writer I interviewed, and since I already had my quota, I wasn't going to need Lisa, but she seemed so disappointed I agreed to allow her to participate anyway, as an alternate. It turned out that one of the previously chosen participants was unable to finish so Lisa became part of the study after all.

Her initial enthusiasm carries over into the actual protocol sessions. As I begin explaining the assignment in all its complexity, Lisa's interest begins to stray. She is obviously deep in thought, having (as I soon learn) already chosen her central figure--her mother, who has recently died of Multiple Sclerosis. Without really listening to my

instructions, Lisa begins filling out the worksheet as I am still talking. She is doing it incorrectly, listing phases of her mother's life rather than particular experiences. I stop her, and carefully explain that I want specific experiences, not generalized ones. She re-starts her jottings.

She produces her ten experiences and chooses the three she will narrate, two of which ("The time when she could walk and talk" and "The time when the family went to the beach") are still general.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of Lisa's writing at this particular juncture, as she begins her prewrite lists, is her difficulty narrating a specific experience in any detail. She immediately and habitually lumps experiences together--"would" and "always" and "used to" and "every summer" are modes of thought for her. She has great difficulty focusing on and elaborating on one specific experience.

Her writing makes heavy use of abstractions--"happy" and "sad" and "outdoor person." I conjecture that she hasn't internalized the difference between the terms "concrete detail" and "abstraction." When she is listing, she says "all the details are flowing now" at one point, but in actuality the "details" are abstractions and generalizations (e.g., "Going to lakes" or "Outdoor person").

Her listing proceeds very slowly, with frequent pauses and exclamations of "I can't think of any more details." The first list (when my mother could walk), owing to its extremely general nature, is difficult. The second list, seemingly about a particular incident ("When the family went to the beach"), is also generalized, as revealed by the first entry: "Every summer up until a certain time the family would to [sic] the beach." The third list presents a real contrast--the experience to be narrated is a particular experience: The time she became sick on a long car ride. The listing moves much more quickly this time, perhaps because the chronology of the experience carries her through. In addition to being produced with more speed, the list is more specific and detailed ("This was a 2 1/2 hour ride" and "The fumes from the radiator was just too much for my system to handle").

At the beginning of the second session she begins drafting the beach narrative, having chosen to write about this one first entirely at random, she says to me. As she writes she works very close to her list, adding the bare minimum of syntactic support to her details to make them into drafted sentences. This draft moves very slowly for her, possibly because it's so generalized that she doesn't know how to manage all its complexity. She rereads from the beginning often, especially when she seems to be blocked. At one severely blocked point she even returns and rereads

her list. As she speaks about her father teaching her mother to fish, she looks up from her work and smiles contentedly, as if bringing back an especially sweet memory. For the second narrative, she consciously postpones writing about the trip in which she became sick and opts for the time when her mother could walk. She begins with a kind of detachment from the experience she's narrating, possibly because of the level of abstraction she's working at. Even when she laughs at one point in the narrative, I get the impression she is remembering "pleasantness" rather than the memory itself. As she writes, she does seem to get more involved in it, rereading and rewriting as she goes along, head tilted toward the paper in body-language closeness. The words are coming more quickly now--is it because this is a part of the story she's told so often, rehearsed internally so many times, that the words are already pre-arranged? Or is it because she's really close to the material? Finally, she hits the end of the draft, coinciding almost exactly with the end of her list.

As we are walking into the room to begin the third narrative, before anything is set up, Lisa mentions to me, "I don't even understand what I'm writing. How can anyone else? It's all like a lot of mumbo-jumbo to me now." She begins work on the third narrative, the one specific incident in the entire paper. She drafts rapidly, once again sticking very close to her list. After ten or fifteen

minutes she has produced a draft slightly more than a page long, and says "finished."

After I explain the combining process to her, she immediately conjectures two generalizations: I was young in all of them; my mother was in the picture in all of them. She begins by writing an introduction to the three combined drafts: "These events which I will mention in this paper. Is going back to my childhood. Showing you what a wonderful childhood this was." At the end of this introductory paragraph, she is stuck briefly. She is, as she says, thinking of "what to say next." She copies the three narratives, rearranged into perfect chronological order, into the combined draft, making few changes, producing three handwritten pages. She then writes a concluding paragraph, beginning "These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around." She rereads it, and the expression on her face is one of dissatisfaction; she adds a few more words, crosses out "mobile" and inserts "on the go," then crosses that out and restores "mobile." The paper bothers her, but she seems not to know what to do about it. Finally, in frustration, she decides it's finished. I ask, "Done?" She replies, "Yeah, I would say that. I don't even want to look at it 'cause it's so screwed up!"



### Gail

Gail is a young writer in the Basic Writing class for the fall, 1985 semester. She is a very difficult protocol subject owing to her extreme reticence. Her composing process, both during the training session and during the protocol sessions, seems to be to compose silently, forming sentences in her head, then writing them down. She composes slowly, agonizingly slowly. She completes the task in four sessions over the period October 28 to November 15, 1985.

She begins the first session by choosing "family" as her central topic, because, as she says, it is the "easiest." After jotting four experiences, she hits a stone wall and seems unable to think of any more experiences. With great difficulty she does manage to get ten, and chooses three: when the family went to the mountains, when they went to Florida, when they went to Plymouth. She begins her first list, writing complete sentences for each numbered entry down the page. She writes slowly and rereads frequently, seemingly because she doesn't know what else to do when she's at a loss. She seems to be hoping that a word or phrase she's already written will trigger a few more words, but on the whole the writing proceeds very slowly. At the end of the first session, she has only completed her jottings of the ten experiences, the choosing of the three, and the first eight "details" on her first list. She also

has spoken very little, so that much of her thought processes have been undetected. She's just non-verbal.

She begins the second session by finishing the first list, writing more rapidly this morning. Perhaps she's over the first-day jitters, though she's still talking very little. Her list is a bit more listlike this time, composed of complete sentences (which if they cover two lines she counts as two details, e.g. "16. the next morning, my brother-in-law" and "17. woke up with a severe pain in his side.") The list is still overwhelmingly narrative in its appearance, and superficial. List 1 is completed in about 20 minutes. It consists of 27 entries, most of which are narrative sentences.

List 2 begins almost immediately. Her body language suggests a kind of bored detachment with the writing, her head propped wearily on her left arm, chin in hand, slumped down in the chair, body slanting away from the writing desk. About halfway through she pauses and begins to write in the top margin of the paper, adding a detail. But before she completes the entry, she stops, crosses it out completely, and continues with the main list. She writes almost entirely in silence, speaking only when she completes the subtask, then to reread what she's written.

She begins the third list. This list is more abstracted narrative (11. when we reached Plymouth 12. we went to see Plymouth rock 13. It was such a beautiful day),

and brief, consisting of 20 entries. Midway through the list she stops and makes a correction to entry 1 on the list, changing "It was Colombas Day" to "It was on a Sunday." She then continues on, and completes the list, having taken about 15 minutes for this. There is still a little time left in the session, but Gail opts not to work any longer this session.

When we resume the protocols, Gail glances quickly at her list to refresh her memory, and then, more quickly than I would have suspected after our long layoff, she begins to write, silently but quickly. She has decided to draft first about her trip to Florida, which was the second list she did. After about a page and a quarter, she seems finished, but quickly writes "1" with a circle around it and composes another paragraph, insert 1. She rechecks her list, then writes a circled 2 and drafts another insert, then a third. She sighs, then tears the page out of her spiral notebook, finished with draft 1. She rereads the draft, commenting almost wistfully "there's a lot more that happened." But she writes no more.

She begins to draft her second narrative, the one about the trip to the White Mountains, which had been the subject of her first list. She writes this one quickly, with almost no pauses or interruption of any sort. In fact as she nears the end of the draft she has to stop writing and massage her wrist, as if it's getting cramped from the physical effort

of writing. The session ends before she is able to finish the second narrative.

At the fourth session, Gail feels some unnamed pressure to complete the task. Without retrieving her list, she begins writing in pencil, finishing this draft with a few more lines. She shuffles through the papers and finds the list for her third narrative (the trip to Plymouth), and begins writing. This draft moves very quickly, silently, uninterruptedly. After about ten minutes, she seems done. The draft is slightly more than one page long, probably about 200 words total.

After I clarify the next part of the assignment for her, she begins her combined draft silently. This draft begins with the generalization "My family and I do alot of things together. The thing we do mostly is traveling." As she drafts, she has in front of her her list, not her first draft; and the narratives that she includes in the combined draft are radically shortened and changed. These turn out to be just summaries of the actual incidents. In less than twenty minutes she has finished, and though she rereads and seems mildly dissatisfied, she insists she would hand in this paper as it is.

### Mark

Mark is a slender young man of 19 enrolled in the Basic Writing class for the fall, 1985 semester. He is relatively open and verbal. Much of his think-aloud protocol is, however, almost inaudible subvocalizings. I constantly have to remind him to speak louder so the microphone can pick it up. But when the writing is going well he is so intent that he reverts to the sotto voce tones. He completed the task in seven sessions from October 28 to November 15, 1985.

At the first session he chooses his center quickly--his father. Like all the Basic Writers in the study, he has great difficulty particularizing an experience, constantly wanting to generalize, for example, "building model airplanes." With a certain amount of difficulty, he finds ten experiences. He starts selecting his three by choosing one, an especially vivid one (wrecking his father's car). This is chosen without regard for the need to find three associated experiences. He finds a second experience (time when we talked about a vacation) that he associates with the first, and then a third (time when we built an aquarium stand) to link with the second, setting up a Vygotskyan chain of narratives.

His lists resemble a kind of outline, in a hierarchical order, groups of details being indented under a more

superordinate "detail." He lists slowly, with a good deal of discomfort. Writing is painful for Mark. He glances at the clock frequently, stares into space, and taps his pen nervously on the table. At one point, during an extended pause when he's obviously stuck, he comments "I'm a terrible writer." But by the end of the second session he has completed all three lists.

At the third session, Mark begins his first draft, once again starting with the time he wrecked his father's car. He writes five lines fairly quickly, then stops and rereads--obviously stuck. He crafts his sentences very meticulously, rereading and recasting and rewriting constantly, sentence by sentence. Often he rehearses a sentence sotto voce before committing it to paper. In his drafting he concentrates fully on the sub-task at hand, describing the accident in great detail, with no apparent awareness that his larger goal is to write about his father, in this case his father's reaction to the accident.

At the bottom of the first page, he turns the paper over to the blank side and looks at it rather forlornly. He stares out into space briefly, but nothing comes. He looks to the list, puts the pen to the paper as if to resume writing, stops, rereads the list again. Finally he begins drafting. Nearing the end of the first narrative he chews nervously on his thumbnail, seeming unsure. He says he's "trying to make a long story short," apparently wanting to

encapsulate the rest of the narrative because he's bored, tired or simply mistrustful of detail.

The fourth session takes up after a five day layoff over a long weekend. As I am setting up the tape recorder he expresses his desire to finish the second narrative today and he "hopes" to get on to the third. After such a long layoff, he needs to reread the list in some detail to get the creative juices flowing again. He finally begins writing, and moves methodically through the draft, checking his list constantly. He finishes off this narrative by generating "After we were finished, I disgraved [discovered], how close I was with my father. I also learned the fun manble [fundamentals] of building. Today my farther and I are thing of going into business building anything out of wood." The first sentence introduces a new abstraction--closeness to his father--that could provide some kind of superordination for the papers, but he doesn't pick up on it. Interestingly, however, the notion of "the business world" is suggested. It will return explicitly later.

He begins the third narrative immediately, closely following his list for this draft. He finishes two paragraphs before the session ends. The fifth session begins on a cloudy, windy rainy November day, and Mark is not excited about the prospects of writing. He writes very slowly, pausing, hesitating, sighing. He remarks that he's

"gotta be in the mood" to write. But eventually he finishes, then continues to explain orally, in detail, the gist of this narrative he's written.

Then I explain to him the instructions for combining the three narratives. He pauses, saying "I have to think now . . . ." He continues, still without writing, saying "Let me look at my beginning sentences." This is a fairly sophisticated strategy for reducing an overwhelming cognitive task to something more manageable--what clues to similarities may be contained in just the opening sentence of each narrative? He opens the combined draft with a statement of coordination rather than superordination: "Their are three different times that accured with my father and I, which are: rakening his car, learning to work together, and having a good time." He has abstracted the gist out of each narrative, but not yet generalized about all three. He finishes two paragraphs of the combined draft before the session ends.

At the next session he rereads what he's written so far, then resumes writing. Essentially in combining the three narratives he guts each one, reducing them to summaries of their former selves. The first narrative, wrecking his father's car, becomes a one-paragraph overview of the experience. He similarly reduces the other two narratives, so that the entire combined draft is still just two handwritten pages.



In the last session, Mark essentially copies over the draft, making a few minor changes of wording and abstracting the narratives even more. Even with the rough draft in front of him, Mark writes slowly and agonizingly: the session is full of pauses, sighs, and erasures. He's obviously not at all satisfied, but after he's completed the draft, he looks at what he's written and shrugs his shoulder with a sheepish smile in my direction, as if to indicate "that's the best I can do." He does continue wrestling with a few wording problems, but essentially he's finished. He tries to change the final period to a comma and continue on with another "because" clause, but it seems futile. He erases the because clause, and announces he's finished.

#### Karen

Karen is a young freshman Basic Writer. Like many Northern Essex freshmen, she is not particularly interested in writing. Her writing is very distant and uncommitted. One may speculate that her dislike is just a coverup for her weak writing abilities. Perhaps her distant prose is also caused by the unwillingness to take her writing seriously. In the training session, she talked continuously, giving the promise of becoming a good subject for the protocols, but in fact wrote almost nothing. She said her usual writing process was like this--she'd talk and talk about her

subject, just letting her mind wander, then "suddenly" an idea would come to her and she'd compose in a rush of writing, finishing the paper in one sitting the night before it was due. She completed the task in four sessions (actually two double sessions) on October 29 and November 5, 1985.

The first protocol session reveals an entirely different set of composing processes from those revealed in the training. After I explain the instructions to her, she begins immediately, narrowing her choices to either "person" or "place" instantly. A few seconds of reflection produces the decision to write about her mother. She seems uncomfortable with the choice, and quickly asks if it has to be a relative. I answer no, and she immediately crosses out "my mother" and writes "Cheryl" in the blank. Cheryl, it turns out, was her supervisor at the McDonald's restaurant where she works and is also her "Big sister."

She begins writing with a surprising speed and fluency, completing her jotting of ten experiences in less than five minutes, and announcing "I've got ten." She picks three--two immediately, and one which she changes after a brief reconsideration upon my reminding her that eventually all three will have to go together in one paper. She begins her first list, starting with the first experience, which also happens to be the first chronologically. She lists quickly, writing full sentences, so that the list, even though

numbered 1-20 down the left hand margin, more resembles a draft than a list. She mentions that she could write so quickly because it is a topic she feels comfortable with. Her prewriting seems really a rehearsal of already known and structured events. Within forty minutes she has completed all three lists. I ask if she'd like to take a break for a few minutes, but she just wants to get done with it. She confides to me that she doesn't see how the classes doing this paper are taking two whole weeks to complete it: "Maybe they're not writing about good topics." Like a griot of an oral society, she relies on a flow of language to sustain itself until the task is finished.

She begins her first draft, and writes nonstop, finishing it in less than five minutes. It is slightly more than a page long, and almost identical to her prewrite, which she hasn't consulted at all during drafting. The other two drafts are completed in the same breathless, disengaged manner, though halfway through the third draft she does get "stuck" briefly. She picks up the flow shortly and finishes the draft. At no point, other than the one "stuck" instance does she pause for more than a few seconds. At the end of the third draft, she stops, consults her list briefly, then announces confidently that she is finished. It appears to me that she is ready to begin the final combined draft.

I insist that we take a break, since at this point less than one hour has elapsed from the moment we started. During the break, I leave the room, and Karen remains, feet propped up on the desk, listening to her Sony Walkman through headphones. When we resume, I suggest that she revise the drafts but again, she balks. Even the thought of rereading the drafts seems unpleasant to her. "You mean I have to read them again?" She does however mention that the third draft--the one she was not been able to complete non-stop--seems "mixed-up" to her, and will have to be revised. She completely redrafts the story, this time non-stop, without consulting the previous draft, which she folds up as if to throw in the trash can. On the other two, she makes no substantial revisions.

At the second, and what turns out to be the final, sitting, Karen begins combining the three narratives into one paper with almost no hesitation, saying she has pretty much known all along how the three were related--a perfect chronological sequence. She writes the title, "My Big Sister," at the top, and then begins copying her first narrative, occasionally checking off an expended detail on the rough draft. She finishes the first narrative within ten minutes.

On the second narrative, she follows much the same pattern, eliminating information as she writes, without comment or seemingly without recognizing that she is indeed

leaving it out. When she begins her third narrative, she pauses and sighs nostalgically: "I remember that day, too! I was so upset." But ironically, despite her seeming closeness to this particular incident, she doesn't describe the event in any detail. Interestingly, during the third narrative, she hesitates at the spelling of the word "Hanukkah," finally deciding to change it to "Christmas" because she knows how to spell it. Karen is Jewish.

Given the chance to revise, Karen makes a few stylistic changes, proofreads her paper for comma splices, then announces that she is done.

#### Roberta

Roberta is an adult student, mid thirties, enrolled in the college's evening Creative Writing course for the fall, 1985 semester. She has taken Composition I during the summer and received an A. The instructor of the Creative Writing course suggested Roberta, saying that she was doing the most sophisticated work of anyone in the class. Her nine sessions spanned the period from December 9, 1985 to January 13, 1986 (interrupted by a two week Christmas break), producing an astonishing 88 pages of transcript. An ebullient, verbal person, Roberta is almost an ideal protocol subject.

At the first session Roberta chooses her home town of Sellersville, Pennsylvania, as her center, possibly because she has just returned from a two-week Thanksgiving visit there and old memories are fresh. She has difficulty particularizing experiences, much as the Basic Writers do, constantly wanting to generalize with "used to," "would," and "always." Writing, she seems physically engaged in her task, moving about, hands gesturing, raising and lowering her eyebrows with the flow of language. Much of the first session involves a tangential reminiscing about her childhood in general, so that by the end of the session she has produced only her twelve jottings and chosen her three: throwing unwanted lunch sandwiches over the side of a bridge, carving the legs of the television table with a paring knife, and setting a paper-towel fire in the kitchen trash can. She picks experiences in which she has done something "naughty," adding that she can see pairs of related experiences, but only one set of three seems related. She is thus aware of a superordination from the very beginning.

At the second session, a double one, she starts her first list, on the first experience named though not the chronological first. She recalls details of the railroad trestle in almost photographic detail, and completes the list fluidly and quickly. Without pausing she begins the second list, finishes it in ten minutes, and starts the

third. Near the end of this list she smiles impishly at her euphemism "plumbing problems" caused by dumping the residue of fire down the toilet.

She begins the first narrative, particularizing it ("So one afternoon on my way home . . . .") though sometimes coalescing or otherwise fictionalizing some details. In this draft she shapes a superordination ("School was so boring we needed something to spice up our our dull little small town existence") but seems not to recognize its potential. By the end of the second session she has finished the first narrative.

At the next session she puzzles over the beginning of the second narrative, and finally opts for an in media res opening like Tom Sawyer, a shouted name: "'Roberta!' I knew by the tone in my mother's voice that I was in trouble again." During one especially troublesome sentence, she ponders it briefly, then notes she'll return to it during revision. On noting that she tried to cover the carving marks with iodine, she recalls that in fact it was Mercurochrome, but since she's unsure of the spelling she allows "iodine" to stand. She ends the second narrative just at the end of the 45-minute session. The third narrative is completed in about 40 minutes at the next session.

With three narratives in her folder, Roberta is ready to begin combining them. As I explain the process to her

again, her immediate response is to joke nervously that it's about "How I lived to be an adult!"

Even though the three narratives were not composed in the order in which they occurred, when she rereads them she states "it makes more sense to read them chronologically." So she organizes the three drafts chronologically and begins reviewing them in that order. The power chronology holds over a writer! As she reviews she makes microcorrections of the text, punctuation and diction, but no global revisions. After about half an hour of reviewing, she decides to jot down her ideas for revising on a separate sheet. Much of this session is a long, rambling brainstorm on possibilities, options, and her own composing habits. She first decides on, then rejects, a lead for the combined draft alluding to the Hayley Mills character in the movie The Trouble with Angels. She is struggling, the tension showing in her face and in her voice, until finally, in a strategy born of desperation and experience, she says, "OK, I'm just going to launch into it blindly," and does. She opens with a lead sprung apparently out of nowhere--out of all the brainstorming and tossing about of options, she opens with a brand new one: "Mothers are constantly telling cute, sweet stories about their offspring." And with the end of this first paragraph the session ends.

She picks up quickly the following night by rereading the lead, then begins writing quickly and more silently than



usual. She consults her rough drafts only cursorily, composing the second versions of the narratives almost entirely from memory, unconsciously deleting material as she goes. Partway through the combined draft, we run out of time and Roberta runs out of energy, even though we know this is the last possible session before Christmas and we will now have a long break before we may resume.

As we are setting up the recording equipment for our final session, she remarks, "I know where I am, I don't know where I want to go," indicating there's still some discovery occurring and still some uneasiness over it. She reviews what she's written so far, and after checking in with her draft narrative, begins writing. This is a struggle tonight, but after a slow start, seeing time slip away, and citing personal and employment-related urgencies for finishing tonight, she begins writing with a kind of driven intensity. She finishes, composes a conclusion, and, since it's late on a cold January night and her brain isn't functioning well, she eschews further revisions and ends with "So that's the only thing I can think of."

### Sheila

Sheila is a slender, distinguished lady, with graying hair and large-framed glasses, in many ways reminding one of a bank teller, with her neat, conservative appearance. She

was enrolled in Composition II for the spring, 1986 semester, and was recommended to me by her instructor, who also had her in Composition I. She is returning to school after raising a family, and while she thinks writing is "fun" has done very little of it in the past 20 years. Her protocol was collected in seven sessions over the period March 10 - April 9, 1986.

At the first session I explain the task to her and she quickly chooses her eighth grade teacher as her center. She begins jotting her ten experiences, but after three, she stops and asks why she needs ten since she already has the three she will be writing about. However she dutifully completes the ten, chooses her three (no surprise which three), and begins listing.

Her choosing of the three is interesting, for she very clearly feels compelled, for deep seated and mysterious reasons, to write about this complex of experiences. All three suggest a long standing guilt which she never explicitly recognizes. The first--the time her teacher lectured the class on cheating--holds a real fascination for her and obviously is a magnet which immediately attracts the two other similar stories. The last seven are never seriously considered.

Listing is a new concept for her, since apparently her composition instructor hasn't taught prewriting. But within six minutes she has her first list of twenty completed. She

flips the sheet of paper over and numbers to 20 again, and begins listing in a rush. Partway down the page she stops, glances at the number she's on, and exclaims softly, "Damn!" Apparently she had hoped her flow of ideas would have carried her to 20 so she wouldn't have to struggle for more details. She resumes listing, and by the end of the first session has all three lists.

She arrives for the second session with a painful hand injury which limits her output to only one and one half pages of writing for the day, a narrative about a phone call she received after high school graduation in which her old teacher offered to pay her way through college if only she'd go. During this narrative she edits "I felt like I was letting her [the teacher] down in some way" to "I felt like I was betraying her," a remarkably telling change. The next session occurs over a week later, spring break intervening, and her hand is healed. She reviews her second list, about a class trip into Boston for high achieving students (she is not drafting the narratives in the order in which she jotted them), and begins writing, stopping after each paragraph to reread. This narrative is more abstract, shorter and less detailed, than the first, and I wonder if her memory is weaker on this one or if there's another reason for glossing over the details of the experience. Closure is very quick; the remainder of the day is blurred: "All the way back home we talked about how wonderful the day had been for us."

She begins rereading but almost immediately stops, saying "I don't know if I'll even bother to reread it." She then begins to scan the third list. She checks her watch and asks me if we indeed have until one o'clock, and when I assure her we do, she begins to write. Almost immediately, she stops, for the first time in any session sits back in her chair away from the work she has been so physically close to, and complains of not remembering this episode very distinctly. This however is the one central experience, the lecture on cheating, and she does indeed narrate it in depth, the forgotten details apparently returning in the heat of drafting. By the end of the session she has completed all three narratives.

At the next session Sheila begins assembling the three narratives into one paper. After we discuss the task for the day, she begins writing, drafting an introductory paragraph. This goes a little slower, and after the first sentence she rereads. She has generated "Elizabeth McKenna was a very imposing person, having been an eighth-grade teacher at our school over the length of time I'd attended." She continues with a subordinating statement: "She seemed very authoritative and in charge somehow even more than the principal himself." When the first paragraph is finished, she crosses out the last sentence. She composes a second paragraph of introductory material, which concludes "...for

not only did she teach academics but influenced us by her strong moral character."

Her revising procedure is to heavily rework the the three drafts before she begins to physically connect them. She crosses out, adds, draws arrows, in a very sophisticated revision scheme. After extensively reworking the first narrative (she has decided on a strict chronological arrangement), she drafts a transitional insert to fit between the first and second narrative, then begins revising the second. After this is revised, she composes another bridge paragraph and begins on the third narrative, adding on an overall conclusion on the same sheet as the final narrative.

The final three sessions are essentially transcribing sessions, as the paper is the way she wants it (she makes only one significant change of content--the omission of a passage on the museums they didn't go to while in Boston) and she only needs to copy it over for the final presentable copy. During the next to last session she makes a copying mistake and must start over, causing the inordinate amount of time the final copy takes. She rereads from the beginning, catching one minor transcription error, and finishes.

Hillary

Hillary is a rather short young woman in her late 20's. She coaches soccer in the evenings, though her daytime job is an accounts manager for a bank in Medford. She is taking Composition II in the college's evening division, and was recommended to me by her instructor as a superior writer. She completed her task in four double sessions over the period March 18 to April 7, 1986.

Her immediate response to the assignment as I explain it is of too much to write about--she has under consideration two people, a place, an object, and an idea ("really a conceptualization or ideology"--she never explains it to me). Ultimately she decides on the object--a former car--because the people and the place have too many experiences associated with them and seem overwhelming. As she decides on the car she already seems to have an attitude established about it: "It has affected the way I think about cars." Her jottings are long and detailed--rather than just naming the experience she begins to describe it in the small blank space on the worksheet. The experiences flow quickly, one immediately after the other in an unbroken episode of writing. After about 7 minutes of jotting she suddenly says, "and that's eleven," and stops.

She picks two experiences immediately, then tries to find a third to fit. She says: "I'm trying to find a third that's at least related because I'm probably going to try to find a thesis statement to tie them together." She's the

only one in the study to use the term "thesis statement" and the only one to immediately grasp that that's the purpose of the task--to tie the narratives together by "finding" a superordinating statement. With a small amount of difficulty, she chooses a third experience that's related (though she still has some doubts about how well it ties in), and begins listing.

Her lists consist of long sentence-like entries sometimes two lines long each. The first list, covering twenty details of the first experience, is two and one-half pages long. Without hesitating Hillary moves into her second list, also with very explicit entries, and in seven minutes has twenty entries and two pages. After the third list, covering the experience that wasn't especially negative and therefore may prove troublesome during concept formation, we take a break.

After the break, she experiences great difficulty getting started with her first draft (on the paint problems)--apparently the list hasn't broken the ice for her, for the prospect of beginning a rough draft frightens her, as nothing has so far. She remarks that this initial block is typical for her. Finally, she begins, with a thesis-statement sounding superordination: "My 1979 Ford Mustang had numerous problems throughout my five year ownership." Once this first sentence is in place, she begins composing with her usual businesslike approach. She

drafts almost from memory, consulting her list only to check off bits of information as she uses them, never to refresh her memory. By the end of the second session of the evening, she has finished the draft of the first narrative.

At the third session Hillary is emotionally down, having just learned of a friend's suicide. She admits she's "not in the mood" to write, but refuses my offer of a postponement, and gets down to the business of the evening. Again she drafts without looking at her list. The lists seem to have been rehearsals for her, but serve no function during the actual drafting. At the end of the evening's first session, we run out of tape and the recorder clicks loudly, but Hillary is unruffled--she waits while I flip over the tape (about two minutes) and then resumes writing. At the end of the second narrative, she takes a short break then resumes writing, now on the third narrative. The apparent lack of connection between this narrative and the first two still seems not to bother her, and the drafting proceeds uneventfully to the end of the session. As I am disconnecting the equipment, she remarks in passing, "There are some things that should be more significant that really didn't come out in this," but she doesn't specify what they are.

In the fifth session, I reiterate the goal of the evening, to combine the three drafts into one paper. She jokes, "If I gave you a thesis statement half of it would be



censored!" She reviews the three drafts, thinks out loud, speculating, then begins writing: "Numerous problems with my 1979 Ford Mustang have forever changed my outlook on automobiles." After an introductory paragraph, she moves into the first narrative, both adapting it and shortening it, saying she's "trying to shorten it up by not being quite so explicit." Again she's writing from memory, without checking the first draft. Surprisingly the drafts are very similar, whole passages recurring verbatim. She moves into the second narrative without much of a pause, again producing a rewrite (a new version) from memory rather than a true revision. At the beginning of the third narrative, she takes a break, and afterwards, resumes, attempting to tie in the apparently unrelated incident with the observation "This trip would strengthen many of my feelings towards this car and automobiles in general." She finishes the combined draft and we quit for the evening.

On the final night, Hillary comes in very late, exhausted from running from the parking lot, harried and breathless. A parent has failed to pick up her child on time after soccer practice and caused Hillary to be late. She begins by rereading the draft from last week, makes a few editing changes, and begins her final copy. Her final draft writing is slow, careful, cursive, compared to the big, splashy, exuberant printing of her drafts. She's obviously not comfortable with handwriting, nearly drawing

the letters with agonizing slowness. We go through two more tapes, as she's just transcribing in near silence, making almost no changes. Near the end, she comments, "I'm getting tired. I'm leaving syllables out." Finally she exclaims (almost sighs), "Done!" and drops her pen on the desk.

### Denise

Denise is a woman in her early thirties, long straight hair, rings on most fingers, and a ready smile. She's on the editorial board of Parnassus, the school's literary magazine. For the past two semesters she has won awards for her submissions to the magazine. For the spring, 1986, semester, she is enrolled in British Literature, having taken every other English course offered by the school. Her usual writing process, she explains, is thinking about what she will write for a week or more, then going home and writing a draft. She completes the task in eleven sessions over the period March 31 to May 2, 1986.

After I explain the task, she begins inventorying all the people in her life, commenting "scratch the 'idea' right off!" Then, "Object? That brings nothing." Finally she decides on a summer camp in the Maine wilderness her family has owned since her childhood. She begins jotting her ten experiences, noting "might as well do it chronologically," though after the fourth experience she laughs, "This isn't

going to be chronological." She gets her ten, then begins choosing the three, picking two quickly but trying many different schemes for the third until one experience wins out: "Keep going back to number 6--it's all by itself but it's something I want to talk about. I'll write it down."

She begins her first list, on the first chosen experience. Still uncomfortable with the notion of explicit prewriting, she jokes, "twenty details, huh?" Some of her "details" are three lines long, as she elaborates fully on everything. After twenty one of these megadetails, the session ends.

At the second session she begins her second list, on an experience in which she was visited by four owls late one evening at the camp. While listing she notes, "this really isn't a very outstanding experience." After eighteen, she is satisfied and moves onto the third list, the nagging and troublesome #6, on climbing one of the mountains near the camp as a teenager. She says, "I still have no idea how it's gonna tie into the other two." This narrative is difficult for other reasons, too: it's aswirl with vivid associations, details and emotions, almost overwhelming her and her ability to sort it out and detail it. She does however come up with eighteen details, and is ready to begin her drafts.

Obviously she'd now like to go home, think about the experiences for a week, and return with a draft. "I'm not

very spontaneous," she says. But she begins writing, conjuring up a "what the hell" attitude: "Well, this is just a draft, so I may as well . . . ." After the second paragraph, she says, "That's gotta be rewritten--awful" Time runs out.

The third session is a real struggle for Denise. Every sentence begins with false starts, agonizing word searches dominate the protocol, and cliches constantly pop up and need to be rejected. Finally, near the end of the session, she has finished the first narrative, except for a suitable ending, which there's no time for. Denise responds, "Good! I hate ending. Endings usually take me about a month to figure out."

In the fourth session Denise begins her second narrative, doing them in the order in which they were chosen and the lists were completed. She reads and rereads her list, considers changing experiences, and finally begins, again reminding herself, "Oh well, this is gonna be rewritten...." She still agonizes over word choices ("Oh, there's a perfect word that goes in here and I can't think of it . . . . It ends in a - t - e.") and draws an arrow to indicate a moved paragraph, still fretting and working over the writing. She finishes the draft well before the end of the session but chooses not to continue on.

She begins the third narrative in the following session, though she admits that she's "not in the mood

today" to write. Again she considers substituting another experience for the one she's chosen, but again halfheartedly sticks with her original choice. She remembers and vocalizes related details, but at first writes nothing, saying "Beginnings are always hard." She begins drafting, pausing after two pages to comment, "Boy, I don't like this at all." She's pausing frequently, rereading, referring to her list, her word flow seemingly drying up. She does however finish before the end of the session, though she stops in mid sentence, apparently intending to continue the draft but deciding it's finished.

In the next session she begins revising each draft separately, the only writer in the study to do so. Most of her changes are minor editing changes, though she does write a new opening paragraph for the "Mountain Climbing" narrative. She spends nearly the entire session editing, and near the end, when finished, she gathers the sheets together and attempts to put them into some kind of sequence, saying she's "deciding what order to put them in," and ironically adding, "eenie, meenie, miney, mo." She is the only one to consciously order the narratives. She decides on "The Storm" as first, the "Mountain Climbing" second, and the "Four Owls" third.

At the next session she begins arranging the narratives, apparently forgetting she's already decided on a sequence. She decides on "Four Owls" first, and I mention

to her she's changed her mind. She continues pondering sequence, and finally decides, "Mountain Climbing" first, "The Storm" second, and "Four Owls" last (which is, by the way, a rearrangement into perfect chronological sequence). She starts by drafting an introduction, which takes her twenty agonizing minutes. She moves to the first narrative, crosses out the original opening sentence, reviews the entire draft, then composes a transitional paragraph to insert between this narrative and the one that will follow. After reviewing one paragraph of the next narrative, we are out of time.

She begins the next session by reviewing the second narrative, "The Storm." When she gets to the end, where she had composed the supposed new introduction, she copies part of that into a transitional paragraph she's started on a clean sheet of paper. On the last page of the "Four Owls" draft she composes an overall conclusion to the combined draft, and announces "that's it for now." She spends two more sessions editing (still word by word) and then copying the combined draft into final form (with extreme reluctance!), the final draft taking a tedious and agonizing two and one-half hour sitting (she could have typed it much more quickly, she reminds me).

Elaine

At 23, Elaine is the youngest of the advanced writers in the study. She was recommended to me by her Composition II instructor, a professional writer himself who moonlights part time at Northern Essex. He told me, "She's so good she won't learn a damn thing from me." She seems very mature for her age, very assured. She's majoring in Word Processing Technology, and wants to work in an office. She likes to write, and has received a good deal of encouragement from previous teachers in addition to her present instructor. "I like to write with feeling," she says, "and that's the way Bob [her Comp II instructor] teaches." When she writes, she sits hunched over, her feet off the ground, left hand steadying her note pad, her head tilted forward over the paper. She completed the task in seven sessions over the period April 9 to April 30, 1986.

At the beginning of the first session I explain the task to her and she seems eager to begin. She almost immediately chooses her mother as her center, commenting "The first thing that comes to my mind is my mother." She lists twelve experiences quickly, and notes "I could go on." The experiences seem very personal, almost egocentric, each closely related to her. Out of the twelve, she chooses the ninth and tenth, saying "We were really close," then scrambles about for the third in the set, which winds up being the eleventh experience. Thus the experiences she

chooses are ones that were generated sequentially but not the first three she thought of. This is unusual.

She begins her list on the first narrative about watching stars on an especially clear night in Maine with her mother. Almost immediately, she realizes she needs a tissue, as she's near tears still remembering the second experience she's chosen to write about, the night the Vietnam War ended and the memories of her uncle who was killed. She says, "I worked up a lot of emotion thinking about this stuff." She leaves, gets her tissue, and returns to resume the list of the first narrative. She doesn't number them, just makes a dash to begin each one, and the entries are short. Her entries on the list are often not details so much as chunkings or some other kind of overview, more like memory jogs or abstractions than details, e.g., "my mother and I were both in awe of the sight." She's only able to generate thirteen entries, mostly because her entries are so inclusive, and she's not comfortable with the notion of explicit prewriting. She begins the next list, on the same sheet of paper, writing Church Bells in the center of the paper and underlining it. On this one she is able to generate twenty five details, and the first session ends.

Elaine begins her third list in the next session. This narrative concerns a time when her mother confided some personal information to her while they were walking alone on the beach. Her final detail is "One of the 1st times I felt



she valued my opinion," a kind of summary of the significance of the story. At the end of the list, with almost no pause, she says, "That's about it, now start drafts?" She places her lists under her left elbow, easily in sight, and begins drafting, again starting with the "Stars" experience. Her first paragraph is a false start, and she crosses it out, saying "I wanna change this already." She begins again, and drafts through to the end, at one point writing, "I felt like there was a bond between us" in the process. After a little more than a page, she says "trying to think of an ending," and composes a three sentence conclusion to the narrative. She rereads and pronounces "Satisfied!"

She then says, "I already have an idea of the way I'm gonna set this up." I try subtle non-intervention, hoping for some further explanation: "You do?" She responds "Yeah," and no more. She pauses for a bit, seemingly lost in thought, silently, then begins the second narrative. She's having trouble getting going on this one, saying simply "stuck" at one point before writing anything. She then begins, "The date, and the year," and, noticing she's writing herself into a syntactic corner, stops, crosses out, and begins again: "I feel because I was so young that time was not important. That could be why I don't remember the date or the year." After four lines, with still a little time remaining in the session, she ends for the day.

At the third session she begins by rereading the "Stars" narrative, then the four lines from the draft begun yesterday. She comments, "This might be a hard one to get into." She begins drafting, this time without the list in view. She does some rearranging of paragraphs as she drafts, indicating it with an arrow. Near the end she pulls out her list, checks it to see if she's omitted anything, then drafts one more paragraph. She begins the third narrative by writing the title "On the Beach" at the top of the page. In this one, she starts immediately with an overview of the experience: "About 4 years ago my mother told me some things about herself that made me feel she was finally accepting me as an adult and treating me as such." She is able to finish about half of this draft before the session ends.

She opens the fourth session by rereading from the start the draft she's working on. She finishes the draft more quickly than the first two, ending with "I felt as if I were talking to a dear friend, and, after all, isn't that what a mother is supposed to be?" She quickly rereads the draft, more a skimming than a rereading, and says, "Now I have to put it together." After a minute of silent thought, she says, "What I want it to come out to be is how the relationship between mother and daughter can be, times that you can be close without talking, and times that you can be close by confiding." In the second paragraph of the opening

she writes, "My mother and I shared many special moments," which apparently is her controlling generalization.

She leads into the first narrative, which is now the "Bells" experience, and transcribes it with few changes. By the end of the session she has completed about a page of the combined draft, still on the first narrative." The shift of order, to perfect chronological order, occurs without comment or even acknowledgement by Elaine.

She begins the fifth session by rereading what she's written so far, then resumes drafting. She completes this narrative and fishes about in her pile of papers for the draft of the "Stars" experience, which will become the second. She drafts a kind of transition, and begins transcribing, again making few changes. After this is finished, she returns to the beginning of the paper to "think of a way to tie the last story in." Ultimately she's unable to subordinate all three and settles for "As I mentioned earlier there have also been times that words brought us closer than ever," which leaves the final narrative dangling conceptually. She begins transcribing, but is unable to finish, so she resumes in the next session. She finishes, drops her pen, gathers her papers in order, and says, "Final draft!" She writes "My Mother My Friend" at the top of a clean sheet of paper, and begins her final copy. Completing this takes one more session, mostly silent copying, almost no changes. When she gets to the end, she

announces "O.K." and puts down her pen. She gathers the draft together, and without rereading, hands me the stack of papers and rushes off to catch her bus.

## CHAPTER 4

### SUPERORDINATING STATEMENTS: CASE HISTORIES

Though we cannot infer the pig from the sausage (Murray, "Process" 3), with a complete record of all drafts and the protocol, we can begin to make some inferences about the process by which the writer's explicit meanings are generated. Abstractions and generalizations leave their history throughout the protocols and drafts by intermittently surfacing, as in Flower and Hayes' apt analogy, like dolphins. By following these surfacings backwards it is possible to trace the superordination to its source, and, by noting the circumstances surrounding each surfacing, make some inferences about its genesis and evolution. For each writer, I use the superordination identified by the readers, as described in Chapter 2.

Each of the writers in the study showed her own idiosyncratic processes in arriving at the final superordination which made explicit the meaning of her paper. Yet, it is possible to find patterns in various bits of observed data and inferring abstractions and generalizations from those patterns. In this chapter I will trace the history of the primary superordination in each case, and in the following chapters I will begin to come to some conclusions about the nature of meaning and meaning-making in writing.

Lisa

Lisa's paper is about her mother, who has recently died after an extended bout with multiple sclerosis. Her primary superordination is the final paragraph in its entirety: "These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around. experiencing all wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that was around her at this point in time. To mention a few, walking in the woods, in the city, going dancing. Just always being mobile."

Interestingly, the opening paragraph of the paper is very similar, centering upon much the same idea, of the pleasant memories associated with her childhood, a time during which her mother was still able to walk: "These events which I will mention in this paper. Is going back to my childhood. Showing you what a wonderful childhood this was. At this point in my life. The family was so happy. We had our bad times but because I was so young I could only see the good times, which was a blessing Considering what would take place a few years after this." Notice the explicit invoking of audience: showing you, irrelevant to the meaning but, in its explicit reassurance of someone listening and collaborating in the meaning-making, useful to the writer for simply introducing the concept of "wonderful." Yet, the final paragraph, with its almost incidentally-appended notion of "mobile," more clearly

states the full meaning of the paper, since the opening paragraph only vaguely alludes to the impending immobility with "Considering what would take place a few years after this."

The first appearance in the protocol of the yoked notions of wonderful childhood/mother's mobility occurs very early, within seconds of opening the first session:

LORI: OK I remember when I was young. I was young. At one time, she could walk.

RICK: Wait a minute, you are getting a little too general right now. All I want you to do is just list ten experiences.

LORI: Ten experiences.

RICK: I need ten of those. The time when, what happened that day.

LORI: I remember when we went to the zoo? to the beach. To the, when she could walk, when she could walk, I remember going to the country, which is western Mass.

RICK: Is that any time, or a particular time.

LORI: A few times.

RICK: Try to think of one specific time.

LORI: I was so young, that I got sick on the way up there.

RICK: Why don't you use that one.

LORI: The time when I got sick going to the country. Let me see. Boy, this is really digging into me. I was young. Specific? Specific. Boy we used to have some good times.

I remember just being a happy kid, you know.

[In this particular exchange, I had to make a judgement to intervene more directly. The immediate problem was that Lisa was straying far from the task I had set up, and if allowed to continue in this particular direction, there would have been no narratives to combine. So at the risk of "leading" her, I decided to try to keep her on task.] Every bit of observational evidence from the session confirms that in fact Lisa had the idea before writing. Her abstracted demeanor as I explain the task to her suggests that she had already decided on her mother as the central "significant person, place, or object" and begins engaging in pleasant reveries about her wonderful childhood. In all probability she has pre-rehearsed this notion before, both explicitly with friends and family and implicitly in a running dialogue with herself. Later in the protocol, in fact, she shows evidence of having worked through the issue of her mother's death therapeutically for herself.

For this particular piece of writing, then, the act of composing is more a matter of explicating an already felt meaning than discovering meaning. Lisa's function from the beginning remains predominantly transactional, with the



discovering and shaping potential of expressive language for the most part bypassed.

After the opening minutes of the first protocol session, where the idea of happy childhood and mother's mobility first occurs, the phrase "when my mother could walk" is repeated mantra-like throughout the protocol, giving the sessions their rhythm. The word "walk," along with its forms "walked" and "walking," occurs 69 times in the protocol. It's a gravitational center she returns to consistently, regardless of how far her thoughts have taken her. She says, just seconds after the above passage from the transcript, "I seen how happy her and my father were before she was sick." Immediately after describing how she had to take care of her mother because the family couldn't afford nurses and her older sisters refused to, she says, "That was a drag, just felt that I had to be with her, not that I had to, but wanted to. Cause I couldn't see her going through that. You could say that we were real close. Let me see. Boy, we had some good times. We went through a lot." This is an unusual variation on the theme of happiness--watching one's mother die usually is not interpreted as "good times," yet with just a little interpretation it is possible to see what she means. The intensity of the experience, along with the inevitable amelioration of unpleasant memories by time, brings about an emotion that feels like happiness. This notion of

unpleasant memories made pleasant (or made to seem pleasant) underlies the inclusion of the first narrative in the paper, a patently unpleasant experience (vomiting during a long car ride) becomes pleasant owing to its association with her mother's mobile period in life.

In choosing the ten, once again her near obsession with "The time when my mother could walk" dominates, for she immediately decides that's her first experience of the related three (apparently regardless of the other two; they'll just have to fit in somehow). She next chooses "the time when I got sick going to the country" because she remembers it well, and finally picks "when we went to the beach," commenting "there was some happy family get togethers there [the beach] at one time in my life." During listing, she again attends to "when my mother could walk" first. She notes "My mother and father walking hand in hand, walking around." A few minutes later, still listing for this experience, she says, "I remember her when she could walk and I remember so many things, like when she could walk. It's just, ah, it's just been so long that I have the feelings, it's just that I can't put it down on paper exactly what those feelings are." Here we see how her concentration on the more abstract feelings prevents her from actually elaborating upon the feelings for a reader.

The next list, on the trip to the beach (really trips, it turns out), is related only to the "happiness" part of

the evolving concept, for neither the word "walk" nor associated terms appear in this part of the protocol. The list for the third narrative begins a strange chain of associations, for the experience itself (carsickness) is essentially unhappy, but owing to its close association with her mother, it is drawn easily into the matrix of happy childhood/mother's mobility. Similarly with the drafting: the first narrative continues the repetition of the phrases "when she could walk" and "happy;" the next two drafts make no mention of mother's walking. Thus the concept of happiness during mother's mobile period undergoes no change at all during prewriting or drafting.

Lisa is essentially a non-reviser, so though she rereads each draft as she prepares to assemble them, she makes nothing but minor cosmetic changes: the content of each narrative remains unchanged and the form of the superordination develops no more.

She begins the combined draft with a statement that is almost verbatim from the first seconds of the first protocol session, nine days previous: "Should I make an introduction? OK. These events which I will mention in this paper is going back to my childhood showing you what a wonderful childhood this was." I see no evidence that, in this context, "wonderful" is not simply semantic recoding for "happy": "I remember just being a happy kid, you know?"

The final cognitive move she makes occurs near the very end of the task. Here is the relevant section of the protocol, as she drafts a summary paragraph:

OK. Um, right now I'm thinking, I was just gonna say something, that uh, what I'm thinking is these events which I have just discussed, these events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around, able to walk around and enjoy all the wonderful and beautiful, these events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around and enjoy all the wonderful and beautiful, um, I'm trying to think, um, what do you call the woods or, um, even a swimming pool or you know just swimming or going to a lake or the beach, all these different places where I, we have went, um, she was able to experience this, uh, I don't know what to call it. I don't want to call it a thing, because it's not a thing. Uh, let's see. These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to when my mother was able to walk around and experience all the wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that was around her. At this point in time. These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to when my mother was able to walk

around and experience all the wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that was around her. At this point in time. To mention a few, uh walking in the woods, or even walking in the city, dancing, um, always being mobile.

This passage illuminates the genesis of the concept "mobile." She's struggling for a superordinate word to suggest her mother's ability to be out and freely engage in vital activities: walks in the woods, swimming, shopping, etc. The word doesn't come immediately, so she reluctantly settles for "all the wonderful and beautiful atmospheres," returns down the ladder of abstraction trying to clarify through exemplification ("To mention a few, walking in the woods, or even walking in the city, dancing"), and suddenly has the more abstract word "mobile" appear, suggested apparently by the preceding catalog of examples.

Pam

Pam's paper is about her daughter. The major superordination is the first two paragraphs:

"This storey is about my daughte Terri Jean excpecinut [experiences] with hospital.

"it was only three time, all happen on a Tuesday."

Its first appearance in the protocol in this form occurs as she's beginning to assemble the three narratives. She gives the paper its title and shapes the lead:

All right. Three experience, I, three experience my daughter has had with hospital. Very long title but I can change it at the end. Uh, let's see, uh, when she was twenty-seven months is three, hand stuck in the wringer is seven, end up with nine. This paper, no, this story is about my daughter Terri Jean experience with hospitals. With hospitals. Hospital. It was only three times, all ended, ended up on Tuesdays, Tuesdays.

This statement is more a coordination, simply asserting a physical proximity in the same paper and a single concrete attribute that all three narratives possess. It's probably inaccurate to call this a "superordination," in the sense that though it's general (by virtue of referring to more than one experience) there's no attempt to go beyond the information given to a more abstract statement. In addition, despite the potential implied in the "only" three times, essentially the concept remains an appendage, a passing observation, whose further significance goes unquestioned and unexplored throughout the rest of the writing.

The first appearance of "hospital" occurs very early in the opening session, after she has jotted down her ten experiences and is choosing her three associated ones:

Yeah. Mmm. I say the, number, number, number, number, number three, the time when 27 months old

in the hospital, number seven, time when yeah her hand got stuck in the uh, and number nine, odd numbers, must match, 3, 7, yeah they are odd. Uh, fell off her bike. Don't really know if they're closely related, but they all have the same meaning, she got hurt.

Here, the idea of "hurt" is closely related to the more concrete idea of "hospital" that will evolve from it. She, like Lisa, knows almost from the start how her three narratives relate, and also like Lisa, moves very little cognitively during the composition of the paper. The phrasing remains almost unchanged, as does the concept itself.

The word "hurt" occurs only twice in the protocol, both at the beginning of the first session, once as mentioned above and again shortly thereafter in the context of "Tuesdays": "She was born on a Tuesday, she got hurt on Tuesdays, everything happens on a Tuesday!" Perhaps she abandons the concept hurt because it's inaccurate, for the first experience concerns an overnight stay in a hospital for a rash, not, strictly speaking, for being hurt. The protocol, however, gives no indication that abandoning "hurt" was a conscious decision.

"Hospital," on the other hand, occurs 48 times, and from the start is a key term, concrete though it may be. Its first explicit appearance is during the jotting of the

ten experiences, rereading first her first three entries. She doesn't vocalize the entry as she first notes it:

All right, the time when I was expecting her. All right, when I was expecting her. Um, delivery day, that's something, oh God, you don't do every day. How old was she? She was 27 months.

Though it's not apparent from the transcript, the question "How old was she" refers to the experience with the rash, and not delivery day, and she writes "27 months--hospital." When rereading a few minutes later, she reads the entry as written. Probably the whole train of thought is suggested by the implicit image of hospital in the previous entries "expecting her" and "delivery day."

After this, throughout the protocol, "hospital" occurs frequently, spawning few related concepts or new inferences other than the concrete and fortuitous association with Tuesdays. At one point she notes that the hospital "scared us all," but doesn't develop this idea; later she associates Terri's pet dog Tuesday with the first trip to the hospital, since that's when Terri received the dog; she remarks she's now getting bills from the hospital; and finally near the end she notes that the rash incident was Terri's first time in the hospital and that these three experiences are the only three experiences with hospitals. Of the associations, only the first and last (scared and only three incidents)



are abstract enough to permit further exploration; the others are simple statements of concrete similarities.

The superordinating statement in its final form has some potential for further exploration, but right up to the concluding paragraph, which essentially repeats the opening paragraph (even to the point of repeating that these were her only three times in the hospital), there is no cognitive movement.

#### Gail

Gail's major superordination is "My family and I do alot of things together. The thing we do mostly is traveling," the first two sentences of the final draft. Its first appearance in the protocol occurs as she's beginning to combine the three drafts into one. She doesn't need to think about it or its wording, for immediately after I explain the next step (combining), she composes the superordination exactly as it appears in the final draft.

The first appearance of the concept of traveling as a major family activity occurs implicitly as she's selecting her three related stories, suggesting that she knows her main idea from the start:

GINA: Uh. I can't, I can't think of anything  
else. Time when we went to Florida.

RICK: How did you come up with that one? What  
made you think of it?

GINA: Cause I saw the mountains and Florida was  
better, so.

[Once again, owing to Gail's extreme verbal reticence, I had to make a decision to intervene, to ask for essentially retrospective information. Without the question, I couldn't have guessed where the connection occurred.]

Between the "I can't think of anything else" and "Time when we went to Florida," there is a brief pause while she silently rescans her list to this point. Noticing a previous entry "we went to the mountains," she leaps to the (implied) abstract concept "trips," which suggests another particular instance covered by the concept, a trip to Florida, with the additional qualifier "better," which turns up in the final draft as "the best and biggest trip." Another indication of travelling is the use of forms of the verb "to go," as in "Time we went to Salisbury Beach." Gail uses "go" and related forms (mostly "went") in the sense of "travel to" 14 times during the composition of this paper.

After "Time when we went to Florida," the next occurrence of "trips" or "traveling" is "Went to Plymouth" still during the jotting, then later, but not immediately following, "Time when we went to Salisbury Beach." After a false start at choosing her three, in which she makes a concrete connection between two of the experiences but can't find a third ("Time when my sister got married" and "Time when we helped her move," presumably immediately

thereafter), she quickly chooses her three, based on the classification "trips":

GINA: Trying to think of which three would go together. Two of them fit together but the third one's kinda odd. Cause like I'm trying to think of one I can write about without being stuck, you know what I mean?

RICK: You've got two?

GINA: When my sister got married, and when we helped her move. The third one, I don't know which one yet, but it's not gonna go with that. [Long period of silence] Time we went to the mountains, time we went to Florida, and the time we went to Plymouth. Those go together. OK, now I gotta write the list?

During drafting she uses "trip," "traveled," and "went" in a limited array of contexts, e.g., "Went to the White Mountains for the weekend," "Went by car," "What a horrible trip that was," "My first trip to Florida," "decided to go to Plymouth," and finally, "My family and I do a lot of things together. The thing we do mostly is traveling. Every year we go on some type of trip. We either take day trips or we go away for a couple of weeks."

The biggest cognitive leap occurs as she's choosing her three experiences and must nudge her original center, "my family," into a more useful (for the purposes of this paper)

concept, which she implies is "trips," even though the first time she actually makes the link between "family" and "trips" explicit is as she joins the three drafts much later in the study.

#### Hillary

Hillary's primary superordination is the opening two sentences of her paper: "Numerous problems with my 1979 Ford Mustang have forever changed my outlook on automobiles. Over my five year ownership period I experienced difficulties, both cosmetic and mechanical." Its first appearance in the protocol is early in the first session, as she's considering her person, place, object, or idea, finally choosing an object:

The people are my mother and my grandmother, um the place in on Lake Ossippee, the object is my ex-car, and the idea being more of a ideology than an actual one conceptual idea. [pause] And I've just discarded the idea simply because it's too broad and I'd be writing a term paper. [pause] The people I can think of a hundred experiences, I think I'm gonna have to go with the object because it's simply, though it was own mine for a five and a half year tenure it has affected the way I will think of automobiles probably for the rest of my

life, so, I'll take an object . . . my 1979 Ford Mustang, cherry red.

Though the superordination is two-headed, "numerous problems" seems to be primary in this piece, for the idea of "forever changed my outlook on automobiles," though potentially more powerful and interesting, occurs only insignificantly throughout the drafts--she simply never gets around to documenting her new attitude.

Of the eleven experiences she notes, nine are distinctly bad experiences ("problems"), indicating that from the very start she has a clear idea of her approach. (Interestingly, "difficulties, both cosmetic and mechanical" underlie only two of the three narratives she finally chooses. The third narrative, as mentioned in Chapter 3, remains a poor fit.) "Problems" remains implicit, however, until slightly later in the protocol. "Problem" first appears explicitly as she is into her first list, having chosen her three related experiences with no mention of the concept:

Working on the paint that bubbled off and peeled three times in the first year, paint bump, um, paint on left upper trunk bubbled within one week of receiving the car. Second one is paint on roof bubbled constantly throughout my ownership. Three, service manager told me after my warranty expired they were no longer responsible, ah, while having

it repainted I spoke to other Mustang owners who also had paint problems.

At the end of the third list, the trip to Michigan, she comments, "I'm thinking about all the troubles I had, not just the trip, which did go fairly smoothly," showing an awareness that, first, she's concentrating on problems with the car, and, second, this particular narrative contains no car problems.

Throughout the protocol she uses trouble 1 time, difficulty 5 times, negative experiences 5 times, and problem 22 times. Most of the time the context remains the same--car problems--but there are a few revealing contexts. After jotting her ten experiences, she notes, "I don't see three positive things on my list," showing that even though she already has formed an attitude about the car even before writing about it, she has surprised herself with the depth of her negative feelings. She doesn't want to sound totally negative. However, of the two experiences that aren't strictly negative, she chooses one to write about in conjunction with two that are negative.

Twice she expresses dissatisfaction with the word "problem." As she begins her first draft, on the paint bubbling, she says "The first problem, flaw, oh, I'm word searching. I want another word similar to those but not quite. Deficiency?" And later as she's putting the three drafts together, beginning the second narrative about the

blown engine, the protocol records, "one cold February morning about two and a half years into my tenure as a Mustang owner I had a second and more serious, reviewing for the word, I'm tired of 'problem,' on my way to my new job." At this point, leading from the first narrative into the second, she needs an appropriate abstraction, for the narrative itself simply begins, "One cold February morning, the Wednesday after George Washington's birthday, I was driving down Route 93 to work," with no explanatory material. Though she's tired of "problem," at this point in the process she uses it anyway. But in the final draft, she without comment in the protocol changes it to "significant difficulty," probably first suggested by the way she has continued the paragraph in the original draft: "on my way to my new job during rush hour traffic on route 93 the car died. I was able to cruise into the breakdown lane, and unable to restart it. Several attempts led me to believe that something significant was wrong and that I alone would be unable to get the car going again. [emphasis added]"

Tying in the third narrative conceptually is a continuing problem. Choosing it was difficult:

I haven't decided on a third. Many of these were, most of these were very emotional experiences, very negative experiences and I'm attempting to choose a third that is more or less related because I'm probably gonna try to come up with a

thesis statement that I can tie to all three. I'm probably gonna take the third one being when I went to Michigan.

As she finishes the draft she laments,

I may choose when I rewrite this, hopefully I'll be in a better state of mind, to rewrite a lot of this, because as I said when I first chose this one as my third I was afraid I might get off onto the trip and I did."

And then in the midst of the combined draft, she reiterates her discomfort with the narrative:

As I said last week, I was very conscious when I chose this as my third idea that it was, I was afraid I'd get off onto, the track, I'm trying to extract those ideas that I put into this original draft that pertain to the car, not my experience of my vacation.

It is in fact the other part of the concept, the changed attitudes about cars, that seems to hold this narrative within the conceptual framework of the paper, even though the notion occurs only weakly throughout the three narratives. She repeats the idea at least once in each narrative, but at no point does she ever come close to substantiating or elaborating it, a fact she herself realizes. For Hillary, the most valuable idea of the paper is the changed attitudes; yet within the paper only the idea



of "problems" is developed. As she prepares to assemble the three drafts, she says,

I thought of what I was trying to do and the possibilities of how I wished to word it and tie all three concepts in together, just seemed, I summed it up in my first statement, my first story, but it doesn't seem strong enough to me. It doesn't make anything, it's just a statement. It doesn't sum up the emotion that I really want to convey.

She feels a close tie between the second and third narratives, but the paper itself is unable to do anything more than hint at it.

Finally, the superordination as it appears in the finished draft is the result of conscious moderating. After saying it's just a statement that doesn't convey her emotion, she carefully avoids overgeneralizing:

I don't want to make too broad a statement that will be completely negative, and it's only my personal experience with the Ford Mustang. So I might feel that I would never recommend a Ford to anybody of any sort. I can't back that statement up with this paper.

Perhaps in writing about the experiences she is forced to examine her attitudes more objectively and qualify her previous conceptions.

Elaine

Elaine's major superordination is the second paragraph of her final draft: "My mother and I shared many special moments. There were times that we connected with each others inner-most feelings without saying a word and times when words brought us closer than ever." It appears to be a fairly complex look at mother-daughter relationships, but a second look reveals it's almost a tautology, something on the order of "we either communicate with words or we don't." The first appearance of the concept of closeness is during the selecting of the three related experiences. After choosing two that she "wants" to write about (presumably because of the emotional content they carry), she needs a third, and after a brief pause decides:

EVELYN: The church bells. [pause] I'd say probably the time we were walking on the beach and she told me about my brother upsetting her.

RICK: How did you get that one?

EVELYN: I'm not sure. The stars and then Vietnam and just that was a couple of times that we were close without saying anything. And then when we were walking on the beach was a time that I thought that we were close because she was confiding in me. It was one of the first times I can remember her opening up to me something that she felt.

Later, during the second session, between drafts of narratives one and two, she cryptically mentions that she's figured out how she's going to set it up, but doesn't say how. At the end of the session I mention it to her, and she replies:

Uh, the one about watching the stars in Maine and the night the church bells rang are two instances that I felt my mother and I were really close without really saying anything. You know, that, that, I felt the mother and daughter bond. The time when we were walking on the beach um, was a conversation that we had that made, made me feel real close. So I was thinking of starting it out that, that a mother and daughter can always be close, sometimes in conversation, sometimes not. And put the two times that there wasn't any conversation together and and put the time that there was conversation, and how I felt, you know, that she valued my opinion.

So it's obvious that from very early in the writing she knows her major superordination, the closeness between mother and daughter, sometimes with words and sometimes wordlessly. But from the way she announces that she knows how she's going to set it up, it's reasonable to conclude that she has indeed discovered this new insight during the writing. She probably hasn't thought of this particular

idea before, and the drafting is not just a working out of previously held ideas.

By the end of the second session, she has formulated her major superordination and changes it very little throughout drafting and revising. Through drafting the three narratives she discovers few further elaborations upon her major theme (really the only new idea occurs at the end of the draft of the first narrative: "It was one of the most tender moments that my mother and I have ever shared," "tender" further qualifying special and introducing "sharing" of an experience for the first time). As she begins to assemble the three drafts, she explains exactly what she is going to do:

Um, what I want it to come out to be is how the relationship between a mother and daughter can be, you know. Uh, times that you can be close without talking, just by sharing certain experiences. And times that you can be close by confiding things in each other. Do you want a title?

Here is the hint of a new discovery, that communication can occur wordlessly if two people with similar knowledge share the same experience, but she makes nothing more of this idea.

She opens the final draft very broadly, almost a textbook example of the "funnel" opening:

[speaks as she write] Since the beginning of time the relationship between a mother and daughter has always been regarded as something special. This is true with my mother. She is a generous, caring person and she has a special love for each of her daughters.

The paper in fact is not about her mother's generosity, care, or special love. This particular generalization is so broad it is only remotely related to the content of the paper. The second paragraph narrows down to the gist of the paper. Even though she says she's not comfortable with the opening two paragraphs, they remain unchanged through the final draft.

The superordination remains as she foresaw it early in the process, and further growth, elaboration or qualification does not occur. There seems to be hint of a developmental sequence (wordless communication takes place during one's childhood; more mature communication characteristic of adults needs words) but this link is not made explicit.

#### Sheila

Sheila's primary superordination is the first sentence of the final paragraph: "Elizabeth McKenna is gone now but memories of her love and generosity and the example of who

she was as a human being are memories I will always treasure." This is a more complex view of the material of the paper and the experiences it recounts, for in addition to abstracting (actually, by Moffett's criteria, this could be called over-abstracting) about the meaning of the experiences with "love" and "generosity" and "who she was as a human being," there is the personal idea of "memories I will always treasure."

She chooses her subject, her eighth grade teacher, because of "some special times" together, commenting no further. And when she chooses the three related experiences (the first three she noted) she does so without an explicit criterion. During listing for the "cheating" narrative, she notes that the teacher "was very sympathetic, gracious" during that experience, and during drafting of the "phone call" narrative she writes "I didn't stop to consider what a generous offer she was making." [my emphasis]

The first appearance of "love" occurs at the end of the session after she has combined the three narratives into one and is composing her concluding paragraph. This is very late in the process, and it occurs unexpectedly, unnoted in the protocol: "Elizabeth McKenna is gone now but the memories of, of who she was have influenced me over the course of my

own life. The love, generosity are things, things, I will always treasure." Though during the production of the final draft the two sentences are combined into one, the use of "love" remains unqualified and unelaborated.

"Generosity" first occurs at the same time, though it's more easily explainable, following almost immediately after the "phone call" narrative, which ends,

I didn't stop to consider what a generous offer she was making. I just didn't want her to challenge me so I told her my plans were firm. She evidently didn't want to accept that, because she persuaded me to set a meeting date at her home. I wasn't sure I would go even then, but agreed so that she would let me off the hook temporarily. I never did keep the appointment and that was the last time I ever heard from her.

The echoes of the "generous offer" probably account for the appearance of "generosity" as an abstraction in the final paragraph. And "generosity," discovered late, remains unchanged throughout the production of the final draft.

The genesis of "who she was as a human being" is much more difficult to trace, because it's so

non-specific that it could have arisen anywhere, at any time her character is being discussed or illustrated. Its first explicit appearance is within the particular context of the "phone call" narrative. At the end of that narrative the protocol reads:

I never did keep the appointment and that was the last time I ever heard from her. Um, see if I covered almost everything. OK. The conversation was brief and to the point and reflected who she was as a person. I can look back now . . . The conversation was brief and to the point and reflected who she was.

This paragraph concluding the final narrative becomes the basis for the paragraph which will conclude the entire assembled paper.

By this point in the process, she has completed only the three lists and the draft of one narrative, but it's clear she is bringing much more than just those details to this task; she is drawing on all her accumulated memories of Elizabeth McKenna and the way she has coded them in memory to write this paper. But what she has explicitly mentioned so far, in building up "who she was as a human being," are the concepts "generous," "stern," "adamant," "tactful," "sympathetic," and "gracious." Yet it's difficult to



say exactly what the phrase "who she was as a human being" actually means, because of its level of abstraction. In addition, "example" was added at the last minute, in the copying of the final draft, and the original "person" was changed to "human being," also at the last minute. The protocol is silent on both changes; they seem to have been made unconsciously.

For the remaining idea that makes up the complex superordination of the paper, "memories I will always treasure," perhaps her writing about these particular memories is prima facie evidence that she indeed treasures them, but beyond that, we must simply accept her assertions that the memories are treasured. The paper ends without actually elaborating on the notion.

#### Mark

Mark's primary superordination is the opening paragraph: "Their are three different times that occured with my father and I. the first time was when I raked his car, which was a learning expecance. The second occured when we were building a aquirum stand, this was the ability to work together and finallily the time when we were talk about vacation, this was considered a good time." Its first appearance is as he is assembling the three narratives into one:

All right, uh, OK. I gotta think of a, let me look at my beginning sentences. Time when my father and I talked about vacation. OK. Time when my father and I built a stand for my aquarium. Personal experience with my father. Can you start this like, uh, it's almost like a narrative? Situation like, uh, like I could say the time, there are three different times uh, I gotta think. There are three different, would you like put it, like, you know what I'm saying, like three different times that occurred with my father and I?

This statement is not truly a superordination, for other than the catch-all term "times" there is no true concept here. The three experiences are simply listed, coordinated rather than subsumed under a conceptual name. At the end of the paper Mark writes his way into a potentially interesting abstraction, the business world, but it's so dissociated from the text that it cannot be considered to superordinate the experiences. Another draft might change that; however, Mark shows no real awareness that his discovered abstraction, partially worked out in the protocol, at this point has no explicit relevance to the text he's created. Thus his final draft is merely a recopying, neatened and

guttled, of his rough assembled draft. His conclusion "This three expences interlate to the Business world" has the ring and form of a superordination but has no information to subordinate.

Left with "times" and "father" as the key terms of the "superordination," we have little explicit to go on to trace the genesis. "Time" or "times" occurs 92 times, but always in such abstracted contexts that at no point can we say this is an instance of the final superordination surfacing in an early form, e.g., "The other time when we went on vacation together." Probably the word "time" itself is suggested by the wording of the assignment (The time when...) and signifies nothing more particular than a syntactic placeholder to introduce the experience he's naming. Each of this ten jotted experiences is begun orally with the phrase "the time" or "the time when," recited directly from the worksheet.

"Father," of course, is his center, and as such occurs frequently throughout the protocol (75 times), but none of the contexts in which his father is presented (he's more like a friend, he's a dreamer, he loves airplanes, he's like an employer, etc.) provide Mark with a conceptual framework that covers all three experiences. He generates many possibilities, but other than the idea of the business world, which he's unable

to relate explicitly, he recognizes none as worthy of superordinating. That he understands the need for and the idea of superordination, however, is clear from his attempt to work in the idea of business.

#### Denise

Denise's primary superordination is the final three sentences of her opening paragraph: "Going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life. It ranged from being a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could confidently handle being alone." This is the most cognitively complex superordination of any writer in the study, naming its subject explicitly (going to camp), and elaborating in two more sentences the potentially empty phrase "different things."

I take as central the concept "helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could confidently handle being alone," particularly growth. The first explicit appearance of this phrase is as she's beginning to write an opening paragraph to connect all three draft narratives:

Going to camp meant different things to me  
depending on where I was in my life.  
Depending on what stage I was in? This is

probably going to be the quietest session. But there really isn't anything going on in my brain right now. It ranged from being a prison to a, a time of, well, it's not relaxation. It ranged from being a prison to a time of . . . . I can't describe that in one word. From a prison to a place which, to a place. Ranged from a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from being insecure to one who could handle, who, all this.

The protocol doesn't show the word "alone" here, though she does write it at this point. The word "alone" has been used in the context of the four owls story frequently up to this point, so its appearance in the draft is no surprise, but the breakthrough here is the central concept of growth, revealing more than a simple chronological chain as the basis for the relationship of the three narratives.

It's very likely that this concept was discovered at this point in the writing, for if we take Denise's word for it, she is absolutely unsure of how the three narratives relate until this moment. The inclusion of the mountain climbing experience bothers her from the time she decides to include it, and she does so only out of a kind of obsession with and nearness to the

experience, knowing that eventually she will have to "make it fit." And it is during the cognitive activity at this point in the composing process of trying to make it fit that she discovers/creates the superordination. All the threads of the experiences come together for the first time at this moment.

Each thread individually has its own history, however. "Going to camp" is the center she originally chose to work with (though the wording is slightly more generalized than "Mopang"), and is appropriately the grammatical subject of the superordinating sentence. "Different things" is a kind of summative shorthand here, for the concept she's working with needs two more sentences to clarify. English syntax will not allow her to clearly include in one sentence all the information needed to identify the concept, so she sets up an anticipatory category ("different things") to complete the sentence and introduce the succeeding specifying sentences. "Depending on where I was in my life" abstracts from the three stories a concept she has noted often before, that the experiences take place at different times in her life.

The concepts noted in the next two sentences are basically abstractive summaries of the content of the three narratives, suggested (almost demanded) by the preceding "different things to me depending on where I

was in my life": "a prison" abstracted from the mountain climbing experience, the turning point; "a place which taught me how much my family means to me" refers to the storm on the lake; the "insecure youth" refers again to the mountain climbing experience; and "one who could confidently handle being alone" covers the Four Owls story. "Ranged from" in the second sentence evolves to "helped me to grow" in the third, as she evidently realizes that the personal movement suggested by prison and how much my family meant is more than a mere range, coincidental extremities; it's growth. Growth then controls the form of the next sentence, with the content summaries of the first narrative and the final one phrased to emphasize growth, "insecure" contrasting with "confidently."

A possible suggestion of an earlier awareness of the contrastive relationship (if not growth) occurs very early in the process, as she's choosing which three experiences are related:

DEBBIE: There's some of just me when I was there with my parents. Then some with my husband and friends, and some with my kids. Probably go over the most recent ones. Easier to remember details. Like the outing on the lake, with Ken and the kids. [long pause] And the four owls. Four owls when I was alone.

Course I'm probably going to change this all around. OK. Can they relate by contrast?

RICK: Sure.

DEBBIE: Good. OK. Keep going back to number six, walking to the mountain. Went to the top when I was twelve. It is really all by itself. But it is something I want to talk about, write about. I'm gonna put it down. I'll make it fit.

If the question about "contrast" indicates she's thinking about the Four Owls and the Mountain, then here is an early seed for the elaborated concept of growth as it appears in the final draft. Very clearly, however, she has no conscious awareness of how the narratives "fit." And in fact she may be simply confirming that The Outing on the Lake and the Four Owls are acceptable for the writing task even though their relationship seems to be an inverse one.

One final ghost of the concept of growth: immediately before she composes the three final sentences of this opening paragraph, as she's composing the very first sentences for background purposes, the protocol shows,

My father built a cabin, built a log cabin,  
fine log cabin, for his family back in 1819  
[laughs], hmm, in the late 50's. And I've



been going there every summer and I haven't missed and I haven't missed a summer there yet. This is horrible. As I grew, this is horrible, going to camp, going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life.

She vocalizes, without writing, the word "grew" as a natural progression from the passage of time implicit in "I haven't missed a summer there yet." Less than fifteen seconds later she is writing her newly discovered "helped me grow."

This protocol passage occurs during a drafting of the introductory paragraph, but the concepts and indeed the wording remain unchanged in the final draft. The discovery (driven by the constraints of syntax, previously rehearsed narratives in short term memory, ghosts of phrases, and implicit patterns) occurs here.

#### Roberta

Roberta's primary superordination is the final sentence of her second paragraph, "But I am sure there are a few mothers out there that will identify with my rebelliousness." It has two main divisions, the generalized "mothers" derived from her own mother and her own experiences with other women she works with who have children, and her own childhood "rebelliousness."

The narratives themselves lead mostly to the concept of rebelliousness, and the "mothers" part of the concept is discovered late in the process, following more from her vocalizations as she casts about for an audience for her final draft than growing organically from the experiences themselves.

The first appearance of the sentence occurs as she's beginning the introduction to her combined draft. She has drafted an opening paragraph as the session of December 18 ends, and picks up for a second introductory paragraph at the next session December 19. The protocol reads:

I don't know if I should have put something else in there, I never remember my mother recounting any stories about that period of time either. But I can recall, and then I was gonna go on, when I was eight years of age. Probably change that too. Already I don't like it. But I can recall when I was eight years of age. Having no children of my own I have a hard time comparing myself to an eight year old of today. But I am sure there are a few mothers out there that will identify with my, I'm trying to think of a word and I can't think of it. Oh, here we go with spelling again. But I am sure there are

a few mothers out there that will identify with my rebelliousness. Is that a word? That is a word, isn't it? I thought so. It's just saying it out loud it didn't sound like a real word.

The first appearance of the concept of rebelliousness occurs early in the study, on the first evening. In the midst of a long rambling monologue, choosing her ten experiences, in which no writing occurs, she says,

Some of the trouble that my girlfriend and I used to get into at school. I wasn't really that bad of a kid after I got out of grade school. When I was in grade school, I was quite a rebel, I think. Because I was held down by the nuns.

Yet the train of thought moves on and the notion of rebel does not explicitly come up again until long after this, nearly two weeks later, as she's talking about other mothers she knows:

Sometimes I think, Jeez, I remember what I was like when I was fourteen, I was starting to get a little rebellious. Course girls are a pain in the ass to raise anyway. Boys, I'd sooner have a whole passel of boys than girls.

Once again, however, the notion is dropped immediately, and the monologue moves on. I can thus only speculate about the seed that may or may not have been implanted during the early utterings of "rebel" and "rebellious." Perhaps she's used to thinking of her childhood in terms of rebelliousness anyway, so there's no discovery at all.

There is some evidence for earlier awareness on her part of the unifying category rebel, though the awareness is in a more abstracted form. Very early in her first session, as she's reminiscing about childhood experiences, she says, "As you probably gathered, I was a problem child when I was younger." This can possibly be seen as a forerunner of the more precise "rebellious." Interesting to note here is the fact that there's probably no way for a reader or listener to have gathered, by this point, that she was a problem child, for of the few experiences she's mentioned so far none could be interpreted as showing she was a problem child. She probably thinks of herself this way, but on the evidence given, such an interpretation by an objective reader would be unjustified.

Shortly thereafter she reviews what she's brainstormed and comments, "I don't wanna write down all negative things here, either. You know, all the bad things I did when I was a child." Though it occurs

after the first mention of "rebel," later as she chooses her three experiences to write about, she notes that they're all "three things I shouldn't have done," further reinforcing the abstract awareness that will become pinpointed as "rebelliousness."

The other half of her superordination, "mothers," is more interesting. On one hand it doesn't really fit the material she's generated; it's added on after an extensive oral analysis of potential audiences, and seems more glib and clever than organically related. On the other hand, it is newly discovered meaning, achieved after a long series of cognitive moves. It's easy to forget, while immersed in the 88 pages of protocol transcript, that Roberta's original center was "Sellersville, Pennsylvania." There is genuine cognitive movement from Sellersville to mothers and rebelliousness.

The first appearance of "mothers" in its plural, generalized sense is during her long monologuing session considering audiences for the paper. After noting a variety of children's magazines (she toys with the idea of actually publishing this piece when it's finished), she moves on:

Whether, I don't know maybe, maybe it might appeal to um, maybe something like Woman's Day or Mother's Journal or maybe it might

appeal to a teenager's, might give them a laugh. Maybe I would have to think about writing it to teach a child a lesson, of what not to do. And I didn't write any of this down! [writes] Um, might appeal to mothers, make good humor article, make a good article for Psychology Today, horror magazine, see I would probably, that's, that's one of the next things I would think of, who do I want this to appeal to? That might take me a while to actually decide.

"Mothers" thus is first suggested by a chain of thought trailing from a series of magazines. Mother's Journal (is there such a magazine?) is suggested by Woman's Day, and from the two she leaps to the abstraction of "might appeal to mothers." This is the generalization she finally decides on to characterize her audience to herself.

Since her first attempt at combining the three narratives turns out to be her only attempt, with only minor changes made on that copy, the superordination remains unchanged (in fact even unquestioned or unexamined) in the final draft. The protocol is silent on the question of whether real discovery has occurred at the point noted, or whether she is just using pre-articulated material to hold her draft together.

### Karen

Karen's primary superordination is the only sentence in her fifth paragraph, the tenth sentence overall in the paper: "After a few months we got closer." In truth, however, no single sentence really covers the entire paper, which may be paraphrased as something like, "Because Cheryl and I became so close, her leaving to work at a different store upset me, even though we still keep in touch." But there's no evidence in the protocol that Karen ever realizes the complexity of what she's trying to say, and it's probably fair to say that for her the concept of closeness is precise enough. Also interesting is the grammatical subject of the sentence: we. The use of the first person pronoun shows that even though the paper is ostensibly about Cheryl, it is in fact not yet decentered, and Karen herself is as much the center as is Cheryl.

The first explicit appearance of the concept "close" occurs as she begins her first list, after having chosen her three experiences to write about. Details ten through thirteen occur thus: "When I was down or upset she would ask me what's wrong. She would help me with my homework. After a few months we close." [sic--though she writes "we got close" she says "we close."] Later, at the end of the listing portion of

the session, she concludes the third list with "We never lost touch. I bought her a gift and she bought me my favorite cameo. We are still as close as when she left."

The first instance of "close" remains unchanged in the transferral to the rough draft. The second instance, "We are still as close as when she left," does not occur in the first try at the draft of the third narrative. But Karen doesn't like the draft and rather than revising it, begins anew, composing a different draft on roughly the same experience. This one does use the phrase from the list, only now rather than being buried in the middle of the experience, it serves as the final sentence of the narrative, and will become the nucleus of the conclusion to the final draft.

As she reviews the drafts before combining them, she without comment changes "close" to "closer": "After a few months we got close, closer and we talk when we didn't have to work," writing in the extra "r" on the paper. There is no indication of why she makes this change. I could speculate that she feels the preceding incidents she's narrated [we would talk and she would attempt to help me with my homework], rather than showing absolute closeness, show a progressive



movement from a kind of closeness to a greater closeness.

The sentences then remain unchanged through the combining process, and in fact the only contexts in which the words close and closer occur for the rest of the study are during rereading and recopying. During the final draft she moves the sentence "she was well-liked by the crew," which originally came after the we-got-closer sentence, to earlier in the paper. This leaves the only other sentence in that paragraph ["She was best friends with my store manager"] fairly isolated, and in copying the narrative into the final combined draft she omits this sentence entirely. This provides a new context for the "closer" sentence, since it's now followed by "She only worked in Lawrence for one year." The relationship between "After a few months" and "for one year" is thus emphasized, for the endurance of the relationship after the physical separation is a major focus of the paper. Once again the deletion of the "store manager" sentence is made without comment, so I can only speculate on her processes. Quite possibly it was made by default, Karen being unable to feel a clear reason for retaining it.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUPERORDINATION: THE PRODUCT

At the opening of Peter Shaffer's Equus, psychiatrist Martin Dysart asks, "Is it possible, at certain moments we cannot imagine, a horse can add its sufferings together--the non-stop jerks and jabs that are its daily life--and turn them into grief? What use is grief to a horse?" (17). I take Dysart's question here to be rhetorical, but it highlights the uniqueness of the human ability to group bits of information together into concepts. While a horse is incapable of the cognitive activity involved in forming a superordinate concept such as "grief," a human is capable both of forming it and verbalizing it.

Much of Equus is about the mystery of the mind's formation of concepts. Later, in wondering how his patient Alan Strang could have associated the horse with a wounded Christ and then blinded it in a fit of raging guilt for watching his impotent lovemaking attempt, Dysart almost falls back on randomness--utter inexplicability--as the answer to human thought patterns and behavior:

A child is born into a world of phenomena all equal in their power to enslave. It sniffs--it sucks--it strokes its eyes over the whole uncomfortable range. Suddenly one strikes. Why? Moments snap together like magnets, forging a

chain of shackles. . . . But why at the start they were ever magnetized at all--just those particular moments of experience and no others--I don't know. And nor does anyone else (76).

Ultimately, the answer of the desperate and world weary psychologist fails to satisfy. The question remains: how are experiences associated, superordinate concepts formed?

Dysart's question "What use is grief to a horse?" suggests the more interesting question "What use is grief, or any verbalized superordinate concept, to a human?" In general the function of a superordination, or superordinate concept, in life is to code and organize experience into patterns so that our future actions may be guided. A superordination is Janus-faced, looking both backwards (or in the immediate present) as well as to the future. It derives its substance from data experienced in the past or the present and makes a statement which may guide future thought or activity. If we recognize a phenomenon as "another one of those," we have at least a precedent for a response. Recognizing that a particular animal in front of us is, for example, a cow leads us to have certain expectations and to behave in certain ways. This is true even though we may never have seen that particular animal before and it is indeed distinct from all other members of that abstract category "cow."

This tendency to abstract is not peculiarly an academic skill, either. As Ann Berthoff says,

Abstraction is natural, normal: it is the way we make sense of the world in perception, in dreaming, in all expressive acts, in works of art, in all imagining. Abstraction is the work of the active mind; it is what the mind does as it forms. . . . We do not have to teach it: it is the work of our Creator. (750)

Young children learn very early, with no formal instruction, that one characteristic of stoves is that they burn and one characteristic of cookies is that they taste good.

In the larger sense, a view that encompasses more than just academics, Moffett's observation that "the function of informing is essentially to guide action" (27) seems to capture the essence of superordinating. Here I take Moffett to use "inform" in both its meanings: to make form, and to convey information. The functions of a superordination differ for the writer and the reader. The writer makes form, essentially for herself, out of her experiences, and expresses that form in the superordination. Early in the writing process, it serves as a hint of evolving patterns, rough-hewn forerunners of the ends that will be shaped in later drafts. After formation, a superordination can then "be employed in its pragmatic function of guiding thought and action" (Bruner, "Beyond" 390). In a sense, a

superordination, whether resulting from writing or speech or more intuitive processes, is for the writer the product of a movement from the phenomenological to the ontological.

But in publication, sharing the final form with other readers, the writer informs them of her discovery. In its final form, a superordination is the record of new knowledge gained by the writer, and in the final written product it serves to direct the reader's attention to the gist of the writing, either by way of foreshadowing or summary. This notion of double function parallels Moffett's (18) distinction between "abstracting from," the inducing of patterns from raw data, and "abstracting for," the communication of the induced abstraction to an audience other than the abstractor (writer, in this case).

## II. Names and sentences

An essential semantic component of a superordination is the concept name--the word or phrase (hot dog, the food, as opposed to hot dog, the warm canine) which most concisely covers the concept being treated in the piece of writing. Note that it's necessary to admit phrases into the scheme, for often English does not offer a single word to characterize the concept under discussion, even though other languages and Finnegans Wake might ("sprezzatura" and "Weltanschauung" are concept words in other languages, but have no equivalent single word renderings in English). A

name, according to Lindberg, "is clearly conceptual, a way of summing up and organizing a whole cluster of experience so as to present it to the mind" ("Naming" 180). "What is a name? What kind of act are we performing when we name something? A name is a representation of our experience to our minds. . . . Names are the beings that inhabit our mental space. What does not have a name does not exist--to our conscious minds. It may perfectly well exist in other areas of our experience, but until it has a name its existence is shadowy" (Lindberg "Naming" 177). Often in superordinations it is identical to the grammatical subject of the sentence, but not always. Roberta's concept, for example, is "rebelliousness," which is buried deep in a prepositional phrase in the predicate.

Yet the concept name cannot, especially in writing, serve for the entire superordination. Bruner writes, "A superordinate structure is not the same as the use of a general or superordinate word" (Beyond 386), and explains, "A child can frame an explicit superordination in either the labeling or sentential mode. . . . the embedding of a label in a sentence structure indicates that it is less tied to its situational context and more related to its linguistic context" (387-8). By labeling, Bruner means a verbal act one remove from pointing at a physical object; his example is "This--red." The sentential mode, indicating more advanced cognitive processes, is further removed from its

phenomenological context. The most simple example is the inclusion of a copula: "This is red."

Extrapolating along Bruner's lines, it's possible to imagine a limitless array of generalizations, abstractions, combinations of names, copulas more precise than "to be," and syntactic transformations such as embedding and subordination to produce, in the "sentential mode," superordinations of striking complexity: "These strips of red paper, when exposed to alkaline solutions, change to blue." A superordination such as this example, especially when induced from data and not merely received from external sources (such as a textbook) is of the type Britton, following Moffett, labels "Theoretical," the most cognitively advanced writing found in his study (Development 158). Thus a concept name assumes a more complex role when transformed and related in a syntactical structure.

### III. The Superordinations

The superordinations which follow are the ones identified by the readers and process noted in Chapter 2:

Mark: "Their are three different times that occured with my father and I. the first time was when I raked his car, which was a learning expecance. The second occured when we were building a aquirum stand, this was the ability

to work together and finally the time when we were talk about vacation, this was considered a good time."

Karen: "After a few months we got closer."

Hillary: "Numerous problems with my 1979 Ford Mustang have forever changed my outlook on automobiles. Over my 5 year ownership period, I experienced difficulties, both cosmetic and mechanical.

Gail: "My family and I do alot of things together. The thing we do mostly is travel."

Elaine: "My mother and I shared many special moments. There were times that we connected with each others inner-most feelings without saying a word and times when words brought us closer than ever."

Lisa: "These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around. experiencing all wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that was around her at this point in time. To mention a few, walking in the woods, in the city, going dancing. Just always being mobile."

Pam: "This story is about my daughter Terri Jean excpecinut with hospital.

"It was only three time, all happen on a Tuesday."



Denise: "Going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life. It ranged from a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could confidently handle being alone."

Sheila: "Elizabeth McKenna is gone now, but memories of her love and generosity and the example of who she was as a human being are memories I will always treasure."

Roberta: "But I am sure there are a few mothers out there that will identify with my rebelliousness."

These statements are the verbal representations of the writer's new knowledge beyond the information given.

Perhaps the first thing that can be said about the superordinations is that, taken alone, out of context, they don't say very much. They are abstractions and generalizations, and as such, when unelaborated by the life experiences they draw from and characterize, they seem inanimate and punchless. Second, nine of the ten writers, Mark being the only exception, were in fact able to form some kind of superordination and verbalize it--of the ten pieces only Mark's was composed of unsuperordinated "heaps" of narratives. One other case--Karen's--did seem problematical to the readers, but her final superordination does capture the movement and growth towards closeness

exemplified in the narratives, and as such does qualify for superordinate status.

#### IV. Informing: The Writer makes form

What is the form of the superordinations generated by community college freshmen?

First, of course, they are verbal--bits of language as opposed to other types of generalized responses such as bits of feelings or particular muscle contractions. Since they are verbal, they may be analyzed like other bits of language. In Beyond the Information Given, Bruner, citing two unpublished works by his Harvard colleague McNeill, writes that ". . . a perceptual representation consists of both a schema--the linguistic label--and a correction--the visual image" (380).

This model predicts a particular structure for superordinations--a two part structure consisting of a concept name and, possibly, some basic syntactical corrections or limitations. Yet this model alone does not account for the range of structures produced by the writers in the study. Four of the writers (Gail, Karen, Roberta, and Elaine) did arrive at generalizations which fit the schema-correction model. I call this type the "name and specify" type. However, none of the other five genuine superordinations (again excepting Mark's) seem to fit into

this category. Lisa's, for example, cannot be described as naming then delimiting a concept, nor can Denise's.

I found it useful to recognize five categories of superordinations--three that appear in this study (the periphrastic superordination, the name and specify, and the syntactic), one that's not a true superordination, and one that's possible to imagine (the artistic) by merely extending the growth pattern shown in the three that do appear.

The non-superordination is represented by Mark's. Here the separate elements are at best merely coordinated, each narrative having been abstracted into a kind of naming summary and the three abstractions simply placed consecutively. The three propositions have not been subsumed hierarchically under a more general superordination. This is a striking example of what Piaget calls concrete operations--the inability to work with general propositions. (Note: as will be seen in Chapter 6, I am not saying that Mark has not reached the formal operations stage, merely that this particular cognitive move is not a formal operation.) Britton categorizes this type of unsuperordinated information as "Analogic/Low Level of Generalization. At low level, i.e. the paragraph or in this case the individual narrative level, the writer is able to abstract and generalize in order to form a kind of conceptual unity, but is unable then to abstract from those

separate conceptual unities to form a larger conceptual unity at the whole-essay level.

The next level is the periphrastic concept. In this type the concept remains unnamed, and the vocabulary and syntax demonstrate that the writer has a vague, unformed sense of the concept but is unable to name it even though such a name exists, or can be constructed felicitously, in English. The writer uses a complicated and often tortured chunk of prose to sketch out the concept. This, to readers, appears to be just a periphrastic way around using the more precise single word--remember again Moffett's example of "dregs" and "what is left in the the cup after you finish drinking. (174)" In this category of superordination, then, the unawareness of, or the temporary inability to recall, the more precise concept name provided by English is a sign of continuing cognitive or linguistic struggling. Pam's and Lisa's are periphrastic concepts.

Basically a name and specify superordination consists of a concept name (which should not be confused with the grammatical subject) and, on occasion, various modifications which elaborate or limit the concept. These modifications, either temporal/spatial or logical additions, take the form of adjectival and adverbial words, phrases, and clauses. Gail's is a good example: she has the abstract concept "travel," certainly respectable, but little else of substance for the single named concept to interact with.

Notice that even though English syntax allows (one could say even demands) more relationships to be specified, she uses "things" as a kind of syntactic placeholder to fill out the grammatical subject position, and her verb, potentially a strong indicator of relationship, is "is." Karen's, Roberta's and Elaine's fit into this category, also.

Clearly more sophisticated are Denise's, Hillary's, and Sheila's. Of these, readers note the "clear map of the territory to be covered," the "sophisticated connections," and the "subtle details." What is happening seems to be that the writer is using the full potential of English syntax to name, to indicate precise relationships, to provide interaction between multiple concepts--in sum, to distribute meaning throughout the range of syntactic elements in the superordination. For this reason, I call these concepts "syntactic concepts." Unlike the name and specify superordination, the syntactic concept is greater than the sum of its parts, for in addition to each of its elements--the concept names, the limitings and modifications, the relational copulas--we have the interactions, the interpenetrations, which generate more meaning simply through juxtaposition and shared contexts. At this level implication and metaphor begin to appear, for the concepts the writer is developing are too complicated for mere naming and limiting. The reader begins to sense some deep, personal reverberations.

Finally, through extrapolation, it is possible to indicate the existence of a fifth category, the artistic, an even more sophisticated superordination which relies on metaphor, implication, purposeful juxtaposition, and suggestion to convey a concept too deep, too mythic or unconscious, for explicitness. Moffett allows for, though doesn't treat, this category of abstraction:

At any time of life we have some inner material that we cannot express directly and explicitly; we have to say it indirectly and often unconsciously . . . and so we have art. In other words, students progressively push back the frontier of the unknown by converting the implicit into the explicit, but no one can go all the way. (48-49)

(emphasis added)

This is the kind of superordination that, coming almost full circle, approaches a non-superordination--the meaning is spread throughout the entire piece, rather than concentrated in the primary superordination. If a piece does contain a superordination, a reader is aware, as in Orwell's "Marrakech" or "Shooting an Elephant," that the essay embodies so much more than merely what is made explicit in the superordination. Seemingly abrupt, transitionless juxtapositions, rather than confusing the reader, are skillfully controlled by the writer to throw off sparks of implied meanings, to create tensions that approach deeper

meanings. (Branscomb, "Story to Meaning," 666-667). Shakespeare's sonnets often follow this form: three consecutive quatrains, juxtaposed images, and a final couplet of comment. The meaning is created by the interaction of the images in the three quatrains rather than the writer's explicit superordination.

#### V. The Superordinations: content and scope

One characteristic of the non-superordinations, the periphrastic superordinations, and even some of the name and specify superordinations is that they seem to segment experience into too large or too small a chunk. Mark's "superordination," for example, remains "times" and the remainder of the modifying materials syncretically lists the individual characteristics of each narrative, much like Britton's "Analogic/Low level of generalization" category. Lisa's remains felt, verbally inexplicit, "shadowy," in Lindberg's terms. Superordinations such as Lisa's resemble the "hyperordinations" noted by Olver and Hornsby (79). It's also possible to imagine, following Moffett's lead, superordinations that don't truly superordinate, that stay concrete and complexive (in Vygotsky's terms)--noting that blood, fire engines and stop signs form a category because they're all red, for example. An example of such is Pam's statement that "all happen on a Tuesday." On the analogy of "hyperordination," we might call these "hypo-ordinations,"

and since both over- and under-abstracting are signs of intermediate refinement towards a true abstract superordination and need to be categorized together, perhaps it would be useful to invent, in the spirit of Joyce, an intermediate category name between syncretic heaps and true concepts: the H-ordination. The H-ordination is the sentence which verbalizes the near-concepts referred to by Moffett: the over-abstractions as well as the under-abstractions (29).

The syntactic superordinations, because they are fuller and more complex, seem to more closely resemble Moffett's most abstract form of superordination--the theoretical, even though there were no actual occurrences of a theoretical superordination in this study. A true theoretical superordination would take the form "To separate salt from water you have to boil it" (Britton, Development 161) or "Children of drug addicts will grow up to be addicts themselves." Note that for purposes of classification, only the form and content of the superordination are taken into consideration--bizarre and even false hypotheses still qualify as hypotheses (Wilkinson [72] admits to Level 4--Speculating in his Cognitive Model an "irrelevant [even if beautiful] hypothesis": "If we didn't come to school we would get sick and die.") The defining characteristic of a theoretical superordination is that it is an induction from specific data, it finds and names general patterns in those



specific instances, and it makes a prediction about the future based on those general patterns.

In some respects the superordinations of Hillary, Denise, Roberta and Sheila seem to qualify as theoretical, and Elaine's almost cries out for the inductive leap that would move from generalizations about personal experiences to hypotheses about "mother-daughter relationships." Hillary's, because it implies a guide for future action ("have forever changed my outlook on automobiles"), comes closest to a true theoretical superordination, but it is still formally tied to the three narratives, and uses the present perfect tense, halfway between the past of reporting and the present of generalization. Roberta's has the feel and structure of a theoretical superordination, for it uses the future tense and seems to make a statement about the future, but in fact the subject (not the grammatical subject) of the superordination is "rebelliousness," and what "mothers" will or will not do is irrelevant in the context of the paper. In this case, the introduction into the paper of the notion of "mothers" can be traced more to an awareness of audience than to the need to superordinate.

The fact that no true theoretical superordinations were generated in this study should not be taken as proof of the cognitive immaturity of any of the writers. The study is really designed to uncover the beginnings of superordination, rather than follow it through in all its

most sophisticated manifestations. So the task itself did not call for theorizing, and was correctly interpreted by the writers as such. It was so couched in personal terms and so demanding of fidelity to the experiences being narrated that each writer interpreted the task as demanding generalizing but stopping short of theorizing. Hillary, in fact, consciously (and appropriately, I think) stopped herself from making a more sweeping hypothesis in the preparation of her rough draft:

But I don't want to make too broad a statement that will be completely negative and it's only my personal experience with the Ford Mustang. So I might feel that I would never recommend a Ford to anybody of any sort; I can't back that statement up with this paper.

VI. Informing: The Writer conveys meaning, the reader responds

The other function of superordinations is to communicate the writer's knowledge to a reader. To determine how superordinations affect readers, I asked eight experienced college English instructors to respond to the ten superordinations, detailing how they reacted to each and explaining what criteria they used in their responses.

First, the differences between the superordinations of the advanced writers and the Basic Writers are pronounced.

Of the eight readers' responses, five identified all ten superordinations correctly. Of the other three, each mixed up only one pair, so that of eighty responses, seventy four (92%) were correct. Apparently, there is something other than accidents of grammar, spelling, and punctuation that clearly identifies, for readers, the level of writer.

Interestingly, a number of responses, either written on the form or presented to me orally, complained of the difficulty of identification because I had corrected the mechanics as much as possible. The clear implication was that I had tried to disguise the true Basic Writers by hiding the obvious clues to their identities--their mechanical lapses. In Lisa's case, I was unable to "correct" one of her sentence fragments without doing real injustice to her meaning, so I chose to keep it, hoping it would be accepted as an intentional fragment. Some of the readers picked up on it and used it as prima facie evidence of basic writing. One sample response, the complete explanation of why Lisa's was placed with the Basic Writers': "Run on 1st sentence [note: the first sentence, though rambling, is technically not a run on]--2nd sentence seems to be a fragment." Yet, even those who thought they needed the obvious clue of mechanical weakness to identify the Basic Writers managed without the superficial indicators.

A second interesting preliminary point: of the three pairs that were switched by readers, no single writer was misidentified more than once. For example, one reader identified Hillary's as basic, but all seven others identified hers correctly. One reader switched Karen and Hillary; one, Lisa and Denise; the third, Pam and Roberta. The reader who identified Hillary as basic responded, "The first sentence hints at a change in outlook; the second does not illuminate us any further. No connection has been made." And of Karen the reader wrote, "Although this is a very short statement, it hints at a sort of reflection on what has been written; it indicates a growth pattern has been established, a sophisticated connection." The second reader mentioned said of Lisa's, "Good feeling and detail," both of which are undeniably true, and of Denise's, "'It' is rather vague and is used in two of the three sentences in the sample." The third reader said of Pam's, "Good limitation and sense of direction," and of Roberta's, "Too limited to audience--'mothers . . . who will identify with [me].' Rebelliousness--vague." The criteria used to identify advanced superordinations seem consistent; only the subjective application of each reader changes, further reinforcing the notion that advanced writers make identifiably different kinds of superordinations.

In general, readers responded to the superordinations from four perspectives: textual features, the content and

scope, the "personality" of the superordination, and, to a suprisingly small extent, the function of the superordination.

Most common was a response to textual features: vocabulary choice, syntax, wordiness, "advanced phrasing." Of the advanced writers readers wrote, "sufficient vocabulary and syntax to express a pattern" and "neat parallel construction." Conversely, the Basic Writers were deemed so for "no subordination" or "lack of complex syntax" or "'fancy' vocabulary that isn't exact or appropriate." The one grammatical "error" remaining was noted by more than one reader. In assigning Roberta's superordination to the basic category, one reader called Roberta's choice of "rebelliousness" "vague." Apparently the most certain sign of cognitively advanced writing is the ability to handle the grammar of subordination and the vocabulary of academia. One reader even praised Hillary's phrase "my five year ownership period," a certain candidate for any editor's blue pencilling.

The next most common response was to the content and scope of the superordination. In general, readers thought that the better superordinations presented an accurate "map of the territory," that is, neither too large ("too general") nor too small ("concrete" or "not necessarily important" or even "simplistic"). In other words, most readers assigned the H-ordinations to the basic writer category. In fact,

the contradiction embraced in this category is illustrated by two characterizations: "vague" and "concrete." Generally, to a writing instructor vague writing is not concrete and conversely concrete writing is not vague, yet here we have both words being used to explain the assignation of sentences to the same category. Readers almost intuitively recognized the mismatch of statement scope to experience as a sign of weakness in writing.

Many readers also responded subjectively to what seems the "personality" of the superordination. The better ones were called "sophisticated," "clear," "reflective," "fluent," and even "assertive" and "confident." The weaker ones were called "simplistic and awkward," "short," "vague," and "too insignificant." Interestingly, more of these affective words were applied to the better writers--generally the reader was able to pinpoint the weakness, if there was one; but to tabulate the virtues of an advanced superordination seemed more difficult, and elicited more undetailed abstractions. How does one precisely explain a "confident" piece of writing?

Some readers were able to detail more effectively their responses to the advanced superordinations by characterizing them as "condensed," "well-developed," "specific," with "subtle details." One, especially, showed "an ability to order perceptions."

Finally, there were some references to the function of the superordination and, by implication, some evaluation of how well it fulfilled its function. Apparently, a superordination should "show insight" into "sophisticated connections" and give a "sense of direction" by "denot[ing] the topic and purpose." Most of the readers who noted anything at all about the function rightly, I think, noted the purpose a superordination serves for the reader: to "stimulate the reader's interest" and, as before, "denote the topic and purpose." One reader, apparently responding as a teacher-critic rather than reader, wrote that the superordination "doesn't do anything to keep the writer on target," thus recognizing the importance to the writer of forming superordinations.

The relative lack of references to the function of the superordination can be partly explained, I believe, by the lack of context for them. I gave the readers just the sentences themselves, not the entire texts, and it's very difficult to determine the function or evaluate the success of superordinations out of context. Hence, the preponderance of textual analyses over reader interactions with the text.

One final observation about the readers' responses: all the readers seemed to be working from a deficit model of superordination. The advanced writers were the norm, and the basic writers were invariably referred to as lacking or

failing. The most common word used in the basic writer descriptions was "not." Characterizations such as "not intriguing" and "not able to put into words what the commonality is" and "no connection" abound. I suggest this implies that the readers were working from a preconceived model of what a superordination is, using a culturally-supplied abstraction, and checking each of the ten superordinations for a match with the abstract model.



CHAPTER 6  
SUPERORDINATION: THE PROCESS

1. The Eureka Moment

The legend of Archimedes reports that, upon discovering the principle of specific gravity in a flash of inspiration, he ran into the streets shouting "Eureka!" which means in Greek "I have found it." And the word since then has become synonymous for insight that appears suddenly, as in a flash--the cartoon lightbulb lighting up over a character's head. And even though, as Bruner writes, "Discovery, like surprise, favors the well-prepared mind" (On Knowing 82), there is about all such discovery an air of non-rationality, of incomprehensible creative forces at work, the right side of the brain making fortuitous connections between apparently unrelated images or experiences and leaving it for the linear left side to name and make explicit the connections. Writing prepares the mind by generating, rehearsing and temporarily recording the elements that will come together to produce the surprise--the eureka moment when the elements coalesce and a superordination is formed.

For this study I identify the moment at which the superordination first appears in some form which approximates the scope and feel of the final form. The more interesting question--"when is the writer first aware of the concept, even if wordlessly?"--transcends the study and

reaches far back into the writers' lives. Denise may have vaguely felt that camp helped her grow, even as she was experiencing the growth, but for a researcher to identify the inception of that feeling is probably impossible.

Immediately, I was struck by the fact that not one of the ten writers experiences a true eureka moment. No one actually discovers a new idea, a new piece of knowledge, and is aware of it as it happens. Only Denise (and perhaps Elaine) actually discovers through writing some new insight into the meaning of the three experiences, and, ironically, in Denise's case as it is happening she seems not to notice it. In fact, at the point during which the new superordination is being born, she very seriously says, in her protocol,

Going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life. Depending on what stage I was in? This is probably going to be the quietest session. But there really isn't anything going on in my brain right now. It ranged from being a prison to a, a time of, well, it's not relaxation. It ranged from being a prison to a time of ..... I can't describe that in one word. From a prison to a place which, to a place. Ranged from a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow

from being insecure to one who could handle, who,  
all this. [emphasis added]

At perhaps the most cognitively intense period in the production of the paper, she claims nothing is going on in her brain!

For the purposes of this subanalysis (identifying the tempered eureka moments, the moments when the superordinations first take on a form resembling their final form), I identified certain juncture points in the protocols: Point 1, at the very beginning, during selection of the person, place, object, or idea; Point 2, when choosing which three of the ten experiences to narrate; Point 3, during listing or drafting; Point 4, after all narratives have been drafted and the combining or assembling process begins, including the drafting of the lead paragraph; and Point 5, during revising--any time after the lead has been composed and the transcription of the three narratives into the assembled draft has begun.

Two of the writers (Lisa and Hillary) made point 1 connections: they knew almost immediately what the connection between their narratives was--knew in fact what they would be writing about before they had written almost anything at all. Lisa has an almost obsessive topic she will write about, period, and Hillary briefly considers options for her person, place, object or idea before deciding on her car, knowing from the start that its poor

performance has affected her feelings about cars forever. In addition, a strong case can be made for Sheila's superordination occurring at point 1, for her superordination remains moody and atmospheric throughout, the primary concept never being named, and it's possible to infer from her balking at jotting more than three experiences that she's eager to begin, that she already has a good feeling for her subject, even though the final form of the superordination doesn't occur until near the end of the process, at point 5.

Pam, Gail and Elaine form their superordinations at point 2, as they are deciding which three to actually write about. This is a logical point to decide, for the writers know that they must choose experiences that are somehow related, so it's understandable that they will choose three whose relationship they are able to name. Elaine's choices do, however, involve more explicit ratiocination, occurring after more time has elapsed and involving more protocol time. Pam's choice occurs quickly, almost offhandedly, and she begins listing immediately:

I say the, number, number number number, number three, the time when 27 months old in the hospital, number seven, time when, yeah, her hand got stuck in the, uh, and number nine, odd numbers, must match, 3, 7, yeah they are odd. Uh, fell off her bike. Don't really know if they're

closely related, but they all have the same meaning, she got hurt.

Gail's is a little more problematical, for even though it's clear why she chooses her three--they're all trips she's taken--she never verbalizes the word "trips." But since Gail verbalizes almost nothing anyway, it's fair to assume she has the word "trip" or "travel" on hand for the selection process, and that the protocol is just deficient here.

Only Karen superordinates at point 3. As she is into her first list, after having chosen her three experiences apparently on the basis of chronology, she notes the "closeness" between her and Cheryl, and thus her superordination is engendered.

Finally, Denise and Roberta make connections at point 4, late in their processes, at the point where they have drafted the three narratives and are beginning to search for the connecting thread. Holding off the superordination this way demands a good deal of patience and confidence on one's ability to eventually construct meaning from the mass of information given, and not coincidentally it is two of the advanced writers who do trust their material and their abilities well into the writing process. Denise hangs on through the drafting of a narrative she is intensely engaged with, even though initially she doesn't understand her own preoccupation nor does she know how it will fit with the

other two narratives. In fact, at one point she grimly announces, "I'll make it fit"! It is probably no coincidence that Denise's superordination, discovered late in her process, is among the most sophisticated in the study.

Since I have documented the difficulties in tracing Mark's superordination in Chapter 4, I will not include it in this part of the analysis. It's simply not a superordination, and it's so vague in its references that there is no point in the protocol that can be identified with any certainty at all as the first appearance of the concept. Also baffling is the question of what to do with the tangential superordination Mark does generate: "This three expences interate [interrelate] to the Business World." At the very least, it's inappropriate to say that Mark is incapable of abstract thought, and it's also obvious that Mark does generate this superordination rather than adopting it, for it begins to take shape fortuitously as he's revising the second narrative into its final draft form and hits upon the analogy "In the Business world, this factor [i.e., the ability to work together] is very important." He recognizes he's on to something, so that when after much deliberation he adds a summary paragraph to the final draft, this summary notes the relationship of the three experiences to preparation for the world of work. Yet, he does not pursue the superordination, and it ends up

reading like the ending to another paper, as if Captain Ahab were killed in a duel with Macduff.

Two points of interest appear from this analysis: first, on average, the advanced writers discovered their superordinations later in the process, though perhaps the differences aren't significant. More interesting perhaps is the lack of pattern--both Hillary and Sheila (probably) knew their superordinating idea almost from the start, as did Lisa. And Karen, a Basic Writer, actually began listing without having a superordinate concept in mind--that is, she chose three incidents and had to work later on in her process to superordinate them.

Second, none of the writers discovered a substantially new superordination at point 5, during revision. The superordinations did go through some cosmetic changes, but no one actually discovered a new superordination. Even though content went through some substantive revisions, as would have been predicted by the model (Murray, "Internal Revision" 91), the superordinating statements remained essentially unchanged, either in level of abstraction (from classificatory to theoretical, for example) or in scope (broadening or narrowing the range of experience being rendered), though, as mentioned in Chapter 5, Hillary does consider making a more theoretical statement and appropriately rejects it. The genuine cognitive movements occur between the beginnings of the task (the choosing of

the central person, place or object to write about) and the formulation of the superordination. Once it's fixed, it's fixed.

## 2. The Evolving Relationships between the Three Narratives

### a. The Ten Jottings

The writing task was designed to start the writers out at a very low level of abstraction and monitor their progress as they advanced cognitively. The brainstorming of ten possible incidents, in nearly all cases, gathered an array of incidents that paralleled Vygotsky's "Association" complexes, the first sign of movement beyond simple heaps of items. An association complex has been analogized by Olver and Hornsby (74) as a "key ring," a central object which has collected about it, like a number of keys, other objects which are related by differing criteria. In general, each of the ten incidents brainstormed by the writer is associated with the central person, place, object or idea, but, except in a few cases, not to other incidents.

Admittedly, the brainstorming goes so quickly that the protocol is unable to keep up with the writer's thoughts, so that here more than perhaps anywhere else in the study are the limitations of protocol analysis revealed. It's certainly possible that for the writer there are real bonds between one incident and the next, but the protocol for the most part shows nothing. A sample, from Elaine:



The time when we talked about what high school I was going to go to. The time she caught me smoking in the bathroom. The time she slapped my face for calling my brother a queer. The time when I told her I was pregnant with my first child. That was a really emotional time so I'm kinda stuck on that on for a minute. Time when she told me she'd had an affair in her first marriage. Time she called the police on my husband. At my request. My ex-husband. Time when we were sitting at the kitchen table eating a frozen cake and I pulled a huge piece of some kind of animal hair out of my cake. Time we were in Maine looking at the stars. The time when the church bells rang because Vietnam was over. I'm thinking about Vietnam. My uncle was killed over there. Time when we were walking on the beach and she told me that my brother was upsetting her. Well, I don't know if I should put it down, it wasn't funny at the time. She found a bag of pot that I had bought and she dumped it out. That's eleven.

It's possible to speculate about some clustering of incidents, some associated dyads, here. For example, her mother's affair may have suggested the incident with her own husband. And since the incidents she will eventually write about--the eighth, ninth, and tenth in her brainstorming--

come quickly and consecutively, there is some indication that in all probability some unspecified grouping has occurred already. Yet the majority of the pairs of incidents seem to be related only to the center. Suggesting a relationship between "The time she slapped my face for calling my brother a queer" and "The time when I told her I was pregnant with my first child" is, I think, unwarranted speculation. If there is a relationship in Elaine's mind, it's probably undetectable. (A note: introspection here would probably be just as inaccurate--Elaine herself would probably be unable to explain why these two occurred consecutively.)

The other exceptions to the pure key ring association fall into two categories: clustering by low level of generalization, and chaining (usually by chronology). That is, within the list of ten to twelve incidents, occasionally dyads or even triads of related incidents will occur. Examples from Elaine's list have been noted. Both Pam and Roberta show some evidence of chaining, in Vygotsky's model. One incident will remind the writer, through a type of association, of another which has at least one similarity to the first. Again, Olver and Hornsby's (74) analogy helps clarify: they refer to Vygotsky's chain as "edge matching," items linked edge to edge like dominoes. Gail has one dyad in her brainstorming, numbers 6 and 7: "we went to Florida" and "we went to Plymouth." Both are trips, of course, but

the connection seems to be more complexive. She doesn't seem to be using the concept word "trip" to link the two, but rather a feeling, almost the rhythm of the sentences. Number 6 is suggested by her reviewing the list of five so far and spotting number 1, "we went to the mountains;" she explains, "Florida was better."

Lisa, Elaine, Roberta, and Sheila make dyadic or triadic clusters by a type of rudimentary abstraction, often unnamed. Elaine's numbers 8, 9, and 10, for example are held together by the notion that will later become articulated as the ways mothers and daughters communicate. This incomplete clustering, in which two or three items are related to each other but there still is no overall superordination, is closely related to what Britton calls "Analogic/Low Level of Generalization" in the samples from his study. For Britton, it is an intermediate range, showing progress toward full superordination. So in this case I must take it as a sign of higher cognitive activity very early in the process. Only Roberta clusters in both modes--the edge matching and the low level of generalization.

Sheila is an especially interesting case. From one point of view (one that borders dangerously on the psychoanalytic, I concede) it's fair to say that Sheila has missed the point of her own stories. Elizabeth McKenna, her eighth grade teacher and subject of the three narratives,

has haunted Sheila with incredible guilt feelings, feelings that even now, some twenty years later, Sheila cannot recognize. From the start of her writing sessions, it's apparent that Sheila is deeply affected by something she doesn't understand. Her first three incidents are three times the teacher showed her some act of kindness and Sheila felt, for reasons not usually specified, guilt at being unable to respond or reciprocate. After noting these three, Sheila does not want to finish the ten--she's ready to write about these three. She does, however, get ten, and then chooses her three. Not unexpectedly, she chooses the first three. To me, and to the two other readers who examined the papers for primary superordination, Sheila's continuing insistence on her teacher's "love and generosity" rings hollow, given the evidence. In any event, Sheila does make a triadic cluster within her ten, though her conscious and unconscious criteria for clustering are very different.

For all ten writers, however, the dominant mode of generating the ten incidents is the key ring association. The writer feels the constant presence of the center, and it is this presence that suggests each incident. When the writer searches, she more often than not returns to the center rather than the previous entry as a strategy for generating new information. Particularly conspicuous by its absence is the use of the chronological chain as a memory retrieval strategy, either locally (with a few exceptions)

or globally. Both Hillary and Denise announce that they will list their incidents chronologically, as an easy way to retrieve data, but both quickly realize that the incidents are in fact not coming chronologically. None of the other writers use chronology to retrieve.

Vygotsky reports that, in the sequence leading to concept formation, associations occur before chains and pseudo-concepts. Yet, in some ways the association complex is more global in its demands than is the chain complex. It requires maintaining the center in short term memory for a longer period of time, and constantly bypassing the most-recent item in the cluster in order to return to the center for associations demands a larger perspective. If Vygotsky's sequence is correct, then there is evidence that a global view developmentally precedes a local one. Apparently, the first skill on the road to conceptual development is the holistic one and further refinement consists, as Moffett and Shaughnessy have speculated, in teasing out the parts that make up the whole rather than the other way around.

#### b. Choosing Three

The next subprocess in the writing task is choosing which three incidents to narrate. I'm here concerned with which three are chosen and why, the sequence in which they are chosen and the sequence in which they are drafted.

At this point it's useful to once again think of the three narratives, unarticulated though they are, as units, blocks--Vygotsky blocks. Choosing the three from the ten is similar to the process Vygotsky's children went through as they sorted the blocks into related piles in his concept-formation tasks. So it will be useful to apply his model in looking at the processes of the writers in this study as they choose.

Of the ten writers, six (Mark, Sheila, Lisa, Karen, Roberta, and Gail--two advanced and four Basic) chose as their first narrative the first of the ten, possibly implying that the vividness surrounding the first jotted narrative continues and influences selection of the next two. Of the Basic Writers, only Pam did not use the first item from her list of ten as the first item on her final list of three. Yet a closer look at the protocols reveals that two of the Basic Writers--Karen and Gail--actually chose other pairs of experiences first, but because they couldn't find a third related experience, had to rethink their selection criteria and wound up choosing three different related experiences, one of which happened to be the first one from the list of ten. And Roberta's protocol at this point is ambiguous, but in all likelihood she chooses the sandwich-over-the-bridge incident, number one on her list of ten, as the third of the related experiences, and only writes it first on the worksheet. Thus in

actuality only three--Mark, Sheila, and Lisa--seem to be continuously drawn back to their first experience. Sheila's and Lisa's near obsessions have been noted earlier, and Mark too seems haunted by the accident with his father's car, his first-noted and first chosen experience.

So the simplest kinds of expected associative patterns--the associated key-ring and the chain, in which the first experience chosen dominates and the writer is blindly determined to find two other experiences to match it--does not provide an acceptable model for the cognitive processes occurring at this point. Apparently the moves the writers are making are more sophisticated, involving material that's more conceptual, than might be expected.

Sheila and Elaine both choose three consecutive incidents from their lists of ten, Sheila choosing 1-2-3 and Elaine choosing 9-10-11. Sheila's are in chronological order from the start, and remain in chronological order in the final draft. Yet, even though they are almost monolithically associated for her, she does perceive boundaries between them, for when she begins drafting from her three lists, she drafts them out of sequence, suggesting that they are separate, manipulable entities for. (Karen, for example, probably never sees her three narratives as separate.) Sheila's are genuinely held together by more abstract ties. Elaine's 9, 10, and 11 occur simultaneously, yet she at first when choosing is able to sense a connection

between only 9 and 10--Looking at the stars and when the church bells rang. Choosing the third occurs slightly later in the process and occurs consciously, a clear choice to associate with "two of the things [she]'d like to write about": the stars and the bells. The bond between two is formed and named ("close personal moments") and the third one is chosen because it also fits under that umbrella concept, admittedly here chosen by a contrastive relationship ("we were close because she was confiding in me").

Why then did the writers select the three experiences that they did? It seems that in every case but two (Denise's, who postpones superordination, and Mark's, who never superordinates) the writer has by point 2 developed some more nearly conceptual relationship. As noted above, by point two six of nine writers (again excluding Mark) have found and named their superordinations, and two of the other three (Karen and Roberta) can be fairly said to have sniffed out a relationship even if they haven't named it explicitly yet. In five and possibly six of the cases (Gail's is ambiguous on this matter) the writer chose two related experiences immediately and then scouted through the list to find a third that could fit or, through some cognitive moves such as adapting the concept to the third experience or re-viewing the experience to see if it can be shoehorned, be made to fit. Denise alters her concept as her narrative



material grows and changes; the other five use the dyadic pairing to generate a tentative concept, and then find or shoehorn a third into that. Clearly in this case the concept begins to dominate the material. Roberta's case is typical of this strategy:

Um, I can find two that fit together, but . . . .

I don't know about three. Oh, yeah, I can probably find three that fit together, uh, setting the trash can on fire, carving the furniture, and throwing my sandwiches off the bridge because they were all three things I shouldn't have done.

Here it seems that she chooses two, the trash can and the furniture carving, and rescans her list for a third that fits her evolving concept of "things I shouldn't have done": throwing the sandwiches.

The choice of incidents one and two would suggest a randomness or laziness to the selection process, but none of these six choose the first two from their lists. Instead, even the ones who begin with the first experience from the list of ten skip over some experiences in favor of others, so it's apparent that some kind of selection strategy is being employed. Hillary, for example, after noting that she can't find three "positive" experiences," senses a relationship ("negative") between numbers 3 and 6, and then, after a relatively long period of consideration ("long" in this context is less than a minute, compared with the near

instantaneous selections by other writers), with several re-scannings of her list of ten implied, she reluctantly chooses number five as the best fit for the third experience.

The workings of this strategy are complex, and unfortunately the protocols are uniformly weak in helping elucidate them. In nearly all cases, even the ones where conscious ratiocination occurs, the choosing of the three happens very quickly, and apparently there isn't enough time for the materials or the processes to be elaborated.

For the other four writers, there seem to be two other minor strategies used. Lisa, Pam, and Sheila seem to chose their experiences in a block--the underlying feeling is so strong that even in its preverbal state (or perhaps because of it) it controls the selection of all three. The concept or proto-concept exists before the jottings of the ten experiences (probably well before the writing task itself--in Pam's case, for example, it's part of the family lore that her daughter has been hospitalized three times on Tuesdays, for the family dog was named Tuesday in honor of the coincidence) and determines which experiences will be chosen, using as criteria the degree of fit with the pre-existing concept. This perhaps can be analogized to the traditional technique of the thesis-support paragraph--construct a thesis and, like Procrustes, force your material into it. Earlier I have noted the difficulty

both writers have objectifying their material, to examining it for truth in light of the information presented. The same may be said of Hillary's attempts to incorporate an unruly third experience, but the difference is that throughout the writing she is aware of it and her attempts to mold it are conscious. In both cases, Sheila's and Lisa's, one is struck by the lack of awareness of what the material is actually saying, an unconscious fixation upon what the writer intends to say.

Finally, the other minor strategy is Mark's--a simple itemized selection with irrelevant criteria. Mark chooses three because they are simply "the best," by which he seems to mean the easiest to write about, the easiest to build up a kind of momentum or flow of words that will carry him to the end of the narrative.

### 3. Elaboration

Moffett writes, "That elaboration and complexity are developmental seems to be a well established fact" (56). That is, the ability to discriminate between and within concepts must develop, just as the ability to form and manipulate concepts develops. The writers in this study show widely differing abilities to generate and use discriminating concrete detail and lower-level abstractions in the service of forming higher-level abstractions.

The actual written elaboration begins with the listing of details for the three narratives. None of the writers went substantially beyond the minimum 20 the task asked for, even the Basic Writers who I knew were familiar with the procedures for listing. Thus, the first observation about listing is that none of the writers actually used the prewriting technique to its fullest. In fact, a few of the writers--Sheila and Karen--actually tried to avoid the step entirely. Most writers did it dutifully, but without fully accepting or understanding its usefulness.

The ten lists may be easily divided into two on the basis of the quantity of information recorded, or, the degree of elaboration. Those with lists of a high degree of elaboration are Denise, Hillary, Elaine, and Roberta. These lists contain a preponderance of concrete information and precise details--a typical entry in this type of list is Hillary's "Touch-ups after warranty expired lasted 6 weeks max." Low-elaboration lists are the other six: Lisa, Gail, Karen, Mark, Pam and Sheila. A typical entry is Sheila's: "tactful."

It's probably no coincidence that the two categories split almost perfectly along the Basic/advanced line. Of the advanced writers, only Sheila's list is weakly elaborated. From the beginning of the writing process, the Basic Writers are unable to generate as much specific information to elaborate their narratives. Their vision

remains more global and holistic, the experiences more unanalyzable.

There is also a clear distinction between structures of the list entries. Five of the lists (not, however, all five from either the Basic or the advanced category) have a preponderance of entries with fully elaborated syntax. Consider Gail's "The next morning, my brother-in-law woke up with a severe pain in his side." These lists have a draft-like quality to them, consisting of sentences rather than bits of information. And if the sentences occur in a logical or chronological sequence, then the "draftness" of them is heightened. Remove the numbers, and place the entries end-to-end rather than in a column, and you've got the draft. In fact, in Lisa's, Gail's, and Karen's cases, this is exactly what was done. The drafts of these three contain only insignificantly different information than do their lists.

Two of the lists have phrase entries. These are not fully-bloomed sentences, but they have complex enough structures to allow for the communication of at least a moderate amount of information. Mark's and Elaine's are in this category. A typical entry from Mark reads, "Mostly want to go to Distitly. land [Disneyland]." Elaine's list also includes mostly phrases: "Standing in huge yard above the beach" or "leaning against the back of the recliner." Interestingly, most of the phrases are complete predicates,

headless sentences. Vygotsky predicts that inner speech, when identified, will consist of mostly predicates--actions and results, with very few subjects. These phrase lists seem closer to recorded inner speech than do the full-syntax lists.

The final category of list entries is the single word or word pair item. Pam's and Sheila's are of this type. Pam's prewrite consists of three parallel vertical columns of almost exclusively single words on one side of one sheet of paper. (Denise's by contrast is six full pages.) Sheila's three lists consist of items such as "stern," "adamant," "guilt," "didn't go," and the like. A list such as this places a heavy demand on the draft to generate the missing information. In Sheila's case, it will be seen, she is up to the task, for her rough drafts are nicely elaborated, fully and clearly detailed. Pam's drafts remain shadowy and inexplicit, mere hints of good stories.

Note that no one strategy applies exclusively to either the basic writers or the advanced writers. What are we to make of this? Obviously, any of the prewriting strategies demonstrated here may lead to fully elaborated pieces, provided the writer has the ability to perceive the elaborations. For Sheila, the explicit prewrite is more of a nuisance, as she does her detailing while drafting, the prewrite at best serving as a kind of memory jog for her. For Denise, the list is a chance to fully explore her

narratives in great detail, and as such it becomes almost a rough rough draft for her. Lisa employs exactly the same strategy as Denise--a fully syntactic list, with the rough draft closely resembling the list. Yet Denise's is much more fully elaborated. Lisa's doesn't grow in depth or complexity from list to draft. The difference seems to be in a larger, non-writing component of writing ability: the ability to perceive (isolate) and record detail.

Surprisingly, and disappointingly, only Sheila makes significant growth in elaboration from list to draft. Lisa, Gail, Karen, Mark, and Pam remain at very low levels of elaboration in their drafts. It appears that, regardless of strategy, the Basic Writers' real weakness is their inability to elaborate their narratives in detail. And while word counts are not necessarily related to relevant substance, given the lack of padding or puffery in the advanced writers' final drafts the following table reliably indicates the genuine differences in the degree of elaboration between the Basic Writers and the advanced writers:

Name	List	Drafts	Final
Elaine	395	1,135	711
Denise	803	1,790	2,140
Sheila	215	1,172	1,184
Hillary	582	1,513	1,253
Roberta	286	2,472	2,064
Average	456.2	1,616.4	1,470.4
Mark	317	826	282
Lisa	423	647	711
Pam	132	880	852
Gail	457	586	253
Karen	386	543	510
Average	343.0	696.4	521.6

#### 4. The making of a superordination

Essentially, the process of forming a superordination from the raw data of narrated experience must, as seen in Chapter 5, involve isolating and naming the concept, delineating it syntactically, and clarifying and modifying it. These processes are highly interrelated.

Naming, in most courses of endeavor, consists of finding the concept word the culture supplies and applying it correctly. Granted, sometimes new words are coined to cover a new perception--"smog" or "positron"--and sometimes old words have their meanings shifted to keep pace with new perceptions--a no-masted ship may still "sail." These are exceptions, however; most naming requires searching the cultural reservoir of extant concept names and pulling out one to use. With syntax comes the potential of infinite variations upon the concepts supplied by the culture, as the intersection of the concepts "dogs" and "bite" produces the



new category "dogs bite," still open to more syntactic modification and clarification: "If one disturbs a sleeping dog, one very likely will be bitten."

Throughout the protocols there is little evidence of word searching during the naming of the concept. The names appear smoothly, naturally, usually as part of the flow established by the syntax. Hillary, during the listing of her first narrative: "Service manager told me after my warranty expired they were no longer responsible, uh, while having it repainted I spoke to other Mustang owners who also had paint problems." Notice how the syntax demands a name to fill out the sentence--"other Mustang owners" is the image under consideration, and it needs to be clarified. Hence, the "who" clause, the only way English provides to modify a noun after its utterance. The adjective clause then neatly and naturally generates the phrase "paint problems," and with a little generalizing by dropping the limiter "paint" the concept she's been working with as a shadow becomes named: "problems." This is the real power behind shaping at the point of utterance--within the context of the shadowy, un verbalized concept, the channeled flow of syntactic language sets up patterns and expectations which must be filled. In fulfilling those syntactic demands the utterer (writer or speaker) unleashes processed and stored information from the brain, giving the appearance of magical, unconscious shaping of thought. In actuality, it

is the socially-supplied tool of syntax which has retrieved the appropriate name for the concept underlying the writing or speaking act.

Even this model of name-generation in writing is too simple, for in fact only four of the ten form superordinations are of the name-and-specify type. Nearly as common (and, significantly, achieved by three of the five advanced writers but none of the Basic Writers) is the syntactic concept, in which the meaning of the superordination is distributed throughout the sentence or sentences. Unlike the name and specify superordination, the syntactic concept is greater than the sum of its parts, for in addition to each of its elements--the concept names, the limitings and modifications, the relational copulas--we have the interactions, the interpenetrations, which generate more meaning simply through juxtaposition and shared contexts. At this level implication and metaphor begin to appear, for the concepts the writer is developing are too complicated for mere naming and limiting. The reader begins to sense some deep, personal reverberations.

Syntactic concepts develop from a wider awareness of the material being written about--rather than a single thread, they are a thick rope of interwoven threads of meaning. Of the four longest papers--Roberta's, Denise's, Hillary's, and Sheila's--three contain the syntactic concepts, indicating that the generation and manipulation of

large quantities of material seems to lead to fuller concepts. The writer is able first to produce more loose ends and then to tie them up more efficiently. For example, Denise, at one point, desperately needs a concept word but can't generate it at that point. As she's drafting an introduction to the combined draft, the protocol reads, "It helped me grow from being insecure to one who could handle, who, all this." Later, as she is writing a concluding paragraph, she writes after rereading the four owls narrative, which will be the final one in the combined draft, "I go confidently now to that still wild place," the first appearance of the word "confident." She is then able, as she's composing the final draft, to remember the word "confident" (now brought into short term memory?), recognize that it covers the "all this" she had struggled with, and retrieve it and morphologically alter it at this more appropriate place.

The process of generating syntactic concepts is thus fuller and more complex. Denise keeps track of seven identifiable strands (going to camp, prison, helped me grow, insecure youth, where I was in my life, taught me how much my family means, confidence, and handle being alone) that will be woven together at the eureka moment, and while there's evidence that the advanced writers do have more capacious short term memories, writing does store the material and ideas for reminders, thus aiding the memory

during the composition of the paper. Hillary has five (problems, forever changed my outlook on automobiles, difficulties, cosmetic, mechanical), and Sheila six (Elizabeth McKenna, memories, love, generous/generosity, who she was as a human being, treasure).

Denise's process illustrates the complexity involved in forming a syntactic superordination. "Going to camp" is the nominal subject, the primary concept name, of Denise's paper, although the first appearance of the phrase itself doesn't occur until relatively late in the composing process, as she's beginning her list for the climbing experience: "how I hated going to camp and fought it every inch of the way." "Prison" occurs almost unnoticed, but in a way that helps illustrate the nature of the associations and developments the mind makes. As she begins drafting the climbing experience, the first one she will draft, she writes "The days dragged by, with me marking in pencil lines on, or in, on the loft my term of imprisonment." It seems clear that here Denise is working in images, as she herself says she often does, and the image of marking time on a bunk-like loft suggests the image of a prison cell and prisoners marking time, which becomes almost metaphorical in its import here. "Imprisonment" does not, however, recur until the eureka moment, eleven days later, and then in the form "It ranged from a prison . . . ."

"Insecure youth" could actually be considered two separate strands, for "youth" becomes an important abstraction as she casts about for an abstract significance for the climbing experience--it's the one she wants to use but initially doesn't know why. It becomes important that it's an early experience, the earliest of the three, and suggests the possibility of dealing with a growth from youth to maturity. Until "youth" is abstracted out of the many characteristics of that narrative, its significance remains uncertain. "Insecure" is more difficult to pin down--but the protocol reveals a very suggestive juxtaposition that has disappeared by the final draft. As she's listing for the climbing experience, she writes, "no fear of the forest, Dad strode ahead as lookout." There are indications here of a kind of insecurity, and the use of the strong verb "strode" suggests that security is provided by her father in the lead. This is further developed when she drafts from the list, adding at this point in the narrative: "I began to lose, to forget that I didn't want to be there and started to enjoy just the forest itself and had no fears of what was around. Nothing would dare come near us while my father was in the lead." Here is the as yet unnamed "insecurity," which will become embodied only as the superordination itself is shaped.

"Confident," of course, relates "by contrast" to "insecure youth." Its first appearance is as she's drafting

an opening paragraph, before she actually assembles the three drafts into one. The protocol reads, "Ranged from a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could handle, who, all this, being alone." Then, after a long silence, she says, "Throw in 'confidently'" and inserts "confidently" into the draft. Once again, it seems the generative tendency of the syntax she has set up demands that she discover; in this case, the matrix "grow from...to" leads her to the contrasting concept "confidently." Later, after the opening paragraph has been drafted and the superordination cast, she drafts a concluding paragraph, beginning, "I go confidently now to that still wild place."

The final thread Denise weaves into her superordination is the notion of aloneness. This is the easiest one to trace and account for, for it always occurs in conjunction with any mention of the four owls incident. Right at the beginning of the first session, as she's jotting her ten experiences, the four owls incident appears: "The three owls. No, actually there are four. When I was alone with the kids one time." Thereafter, it occurs regularly with any mention of the incident. Apparently, she has already, prior to writing, abstracted the significance of this experience, so that she just carries it along through the composing, and "alone" shows up in the final superordination, almost unaltered.

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLICATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The implications of this study are clustered around four major focuses: protocol analysis, superordination in writing, instructional implications of this research, and suggestions for future research. I include some conclusions about protocol analysis because it remains a controversial method, and the more we know about it, the better we will be able to evaluate its usefulness to composition research.

#### Protocol Analysis

Protocol analysis as a method of gathering data about cognitive processes remains, after this study, a valuable tool for research. It has, as does any research method, some problems and limitations, but if judged by the criteria of relevancy and accuracy of data generated rather than the criterion of perfection, it still is the most useful method for uncovering processes. No analysis of written products can elucidate the processes that went into their production to the extent that an analysis of protocols can.

In one sense, the controversy over protocol studies will never subside, because there is no way to conduct a simple treatment/no treatment study of the method. There's no way of ascertaining what would have happened otherwise--a researcher can't say, "O.K., now compose the essay again, only this time I want you to speak your thoughts into a tape

recorder." The very nature of the writing situation--never repeating itself--precludes repetitions with different experimental variables. And indirect tests of the validity, even ingenious and intelligent ones such as Nisbett and Wilson's mentioned in Chapter 1, will never fully satisfy the scoffers.

a. Unanswered Questions, Problems, Limitations

The first unanswered question is, "Is protocol analysis biased toward the talker, the highly verbal and oral person?" If, for example, the cognitive processes of non-verbal people such as Gail are radically different from those of garrulous people such as Pam, then researchers are mistaken in drawing generalizations from only the good protocol subjects. Gail, and other decidedly non-verbal Basic Writers I've encountered over the years, insist that they don't "hear" language in their mind's ear--there are extended periods of time when apparently there's no inner speech. What if this is true? Without the tool of inner speech, cognitive processes must certainly be different. The question "Do Basic Writers have inner speech" is not flip and cynical; it's a question that must be answered in order to fully understand the growth of the writer's mind.

A major limitation of protocol analysis surfaced most prominently in Hillary's and Elaine's sessions. Hillary makes many associations, including her major superordination, early in her process, and often they are



instantaneous, inexplicable. Her application of the concept word "cosmetic" to the kinds of problems she had with her car happened quickly, without comment, with no evidence of ratiocination or even consciousness of any sort. It simply appeared, naturally and fluently. Elaine's list of ten is similarly mysterious. While there is evidence of some associative dyads of experiences and occasional evidence of returning to the center (her mother) refuel her thought processes, most of the list of ten, generated in seconds, cannot be accounted for, and the processes remain hidden behind a shroud of silent protocol. Cognitive events which take place with the speed of firing synapses will not be articulated in a protocol.

A third question about protocols is related to the inability of reproducing the conditions of composing once something has been composed, like the myth of the Golden Age. The British School, following the lead of Britton, emphasizes the value of speech, especially for young writers, as a heuristic. If speech is such a powerful heuristic, is it not possible that giving a protocol, which requires speaking aloud thoughts that would have gone unspoken in a more natural writing situation, influences the direction and substance of thought? By uttering aloud, is not the writer in fact shaping a different thought than she would have if she had remained silent? Tentatively, I would suggest that, at least for the Basic Writers, the protocol

situation did not affect the written products. They seem more oblivious to the language they have produced, seem unable to objectify their thoughts or language (either written or spoken) enough to see them as objects for conscious manipulation. Verbalizing a thought aloud does not seem to bring that thought more to the forefront of consciousness; thus the direction of content of the text is probably not affected.

But we can't be sure. When I asked Gail, at the end of her sessions, if she had learned anything (hoping to elicit some information about the heuristic value of writing), her answer instead centered upon the protocol situation itself:

Rick: Did you learn anything new while writing this? Did anything come up in the writing that kind of surprised you?

Gail: Uh, I don't know. Hard to say, I guess. I don't know. I don't know, I kinda feel that I can write better. Doing this has helped, you know, reading it out loud and stuff. Doing this.

#### b. The Uniqueness of Protocol-Generated Data

One writer, one of the advanced writers I studied in the pilot, was an astonishingly fluent and demonstrative writer. She spoke very little, so in one sense she was a disappointment as a protocol subject, but in truth her

drafts themselves were protocols. She wrote faster than she could talk, non-stop, with no time to speak, but the language that appeared on paper was very close to her processes. A think-aloud protocol would have been superfluous. She was a rarity.

For all of the writers in this study, however, the protocol generated data beyond the written products themselves: the order and sequence of certain moves and subprocesses, the genesis and growth of relationships, the decisions and indecisions and revised decisions, and the writer's feelings and comments about the process.

#### Superordination and Meaning Making: Implications

We do not need two models of the superordinating process--one for Basic Writers and one for advanced writers.

More sophisticated superordinations require keeping track of more data, and more data fosters more sophisticated superordinations.

The momentum provided by syntax helps generate details and conceptual names.

Discovery of new meaning after drafting is an exceedingly complex skill, more advanced than previously thought.

1. We do not need two models of the superordinating process--one for Basic Writers and one for advanced writers.

This confirms one of the implications of Perl's study, that the basic cognitive processes necessary for effective writing are already in place in Basic Writers--they are just not as elaborated or extensive. Both the Basic Writers and the advanced writers are able to generate information, to make connections, and articulate those connections. None of the writers in the study suffered noticeable block (assuming that a certain fumbling around and indecisiveness is natural and not a sign of writer's block).

A major subprocess used by both levels of writer to generate information is Vygotsky's Association. As I attempted to show in Chapter 6, the association complex is more global in its view, even though it develops in children before the more localized chain complex. This implies that for writers, clusters of data (such as experiences) are perceived first as impenetrable wholes, and need to be broken down into components. Concepts in writing, it appears, are broken down for observation, rather than built up bit by bit. For community college writers, even good ones, deductive processes mature ahead of inductive ones.

2. More sophisticated superordinations require keeping track of more data, and more data fosters more sophisticated superordinations.

The composing process, at least as shown by the writers in this study, is controlled by early discoveries, early purposes, early intentions. Even the revisers such as Roberta, by most standards a sophisticated writer, seem mesmerized by early decisions. Once a concept to control the piece is discovered (or known from the very start), it changes little.

Elaboration, then, assumes a greater prominence, both for the writer and the researcher. For the writer, elaboration drives new concept formation; for the researcher, understanding the role elaboration plays in concept development becomes more crucial.

For the Basic Writer, an experience seems to present itself already chunked, prepackaged. "I told you everything that happened--that's just the way it was," my students tell me regarding their one-page narratives of their high school careers or two-page narratives of a ten-year drug addiction. When I first came to New England to teach writing, I was introduced to a genre I hadn't known in Ohio: the skiing paper. The primary trait of a skiing paper is that it may not deviate at all from the formula. Judging from the hundreds of papers in this genre I've received in the years

since, every skiing experience is identical to every other. Skiing defies analysis. The experience is like a solid-color marble used in a game of Chinese Checkers: hard, unchanged from any perspective, unfaceted, composed of no constituent parts, identical to every other one in the set. Lisa's is a good example of how the fixed nature of experience, perhaps hypostatized by years of rehearsal and retelling, precludes any kind of sorting out or differentiation or viewing from different perspectives.

By contrast, if experience to a Basic Writer is a marble, experiences to an advanced writer are diamonds: multifaceted, reflecting varied patterns of light when viewed from different angles, marked by thousands of identifiable subtleties, no two alike.

The effect these two different perceptual models has on writing and particularly on discovery of new meanings is profound. What can you say about two white marbles? That they're white and spherical and that's all. You can bring up the English name--marble--and perhaps modify it--white--but little more, if that's all that presents itself to your perceptual field. This is the model that so limits the discovery process of the Basic Writer. Because they seem not to discern subtle differences--details--they don't have the raw material for making new connections. If there are no perceptible edges, there can be no edge matching. Bernstein notes this distinction between

analytical thinkers and conventional thinkers, and sees huge sociocultural forces as the cause. His "restricted" and "elaborated" codes result from cultural and economic values instilled from birth by child-rearing, linguistic, and other socializing practices. Regardless of the cause, the inability of the Basic Writers to move down the ladder of abstraction restricts their move up the ladder of abstraction as well. Cognitive growth, Moffett reminds us, consists of simultaneous movement in two directions--toward greater abstraction and greater internal complexity. Apparently, not only are they simultaneous, they are inextricably linked, movement in one direction causing as well as resulting from movement in the other. An abundance of data allows and even prompts the abstractive powers of the mind to operate, needing to categorize in order to make sense of the data and to store it.

What we see in the superordinating process of the writers is that both levels have the tools--the procedures and the abstracting ability--to superordinate, but the Basic Writers stop short because of restrictions, both linguistic and perceptual, on their elaborative capabilities. At some point, either prewriting or drafting or, hypothetically, even revising, the advanced writers work more elaboration into their narratives and thus have more threads to tie together in their superordinations; hence, syntactical superordinations. The Basic Writers, having less material

to work with, can satisfactorily classify with culturally supplied names and perhaps some slight modifications ("The thing we do most is travel"); hence, the name-and-specify superordination, the not-quite-right-but-close-enough H-ordination.

3. The momentum provided by syntax helps generate details and conceptual names.

In an interview during the recent TV special "Back Country Blues," Carolyn Chute, author of The Beans of Egypt, Maine, recounts the story of how poverty and anger and frustration and despair led her husband to put a rifle to his head, only after hours of lonely deliberation deciding not to pull the trigger. She ends the narrative with "It didn't seem like just the fact that you don't make much money that you deserve that kind of . . . ." She allows, perhaps unintentionally, perhaps not, the silence and the demanding onrush of syntax to fashion the concept word she wants. There is no single word that I can think of in English that immediately characterizes everything she has opened up in her small narrative; perhaps that's why she wrote the novel. Certainly, had she written that ending to a written narrative, she would have revised it, coming up with the proper superordination eventually, as well as adapting and tidying up the false-start oral syntax. She is uttering here, and shaping her thoughts as she utters. And



in this case, since she is temporarily unable to complete the sentence with the kind of accuracy she wants, she induces the audience to participate and construct the meaning.

This, it seems to me, illustrates the underlying principle of shaping at the point of utterance. The syntax of a sentence sets up demands, possibilities, and restrictions, so that once begun it has fewer and fewer options for how it will end, and thus it often generates the appropriate word or phrase.

4. Discovery of new meaning after drafting is an exceedingly complex skill, more advanced than previously thought.

For me, perhaps the most surprising and disappointing result of the study is the lack of real growth of knowledge during revising. I see it happen in my own students, even sometimes with Basic Writers well into a semester, so that partly this result can be explained by the small numbers in the study. In a study of fifty or a hundred or two thousand, I'm sure there would be some examples of cognitive movement during revision. And also, not by way of apology, the writers in the study are college students, not yet professional writers. A look at Denise or Roberta in five years would certainly show much more sophisticated revision processes.

Thomas Newkirk has noted the capacity of adolescent literature (both literature written for adolescents and fiction written by adolescents) to show characters in the transition to self-awareness ("Inside"). One of the marks of this transition is the beginnings of the objectification of thought: "1. The capacity to think about one's own thinking. Thinking no longer is simply an activity; it becomes a process that can itself be examined." ("Inside" 112). And Greenfield, writing of both literate and non-literate Wolof children, has noted,

But this type of question ["Why do you think that these are alike?"] met with uncomprehending silence when addressed to the unschooled children. If, however, the same question were changed in form to, "Why are these alike?" it could often be answered quite easily. It seemed that the unschooled Wolof children lacked Western self-consciousness; they did not distinguish between their own thought or statement about something and the thing itself" ("Oral or Written" 173).

She continues to note the contrast with the literate (in French) schooled children, who did resemble Western children in their self-consciousness, and that the differences between the two groups widened with age.

Apparently, literacy and internalized academic or literate thought patterns allow a writer to objectify her thought for the purposes of reconsideration and analysis. And writing itself is in one way the supreme objectifier of thought: when one writes, one makes an object (a piece of text) out of her thoughts. Reconsideration and analysis, the precursors of revision, lead to the discovery of new meaning, meaning beyond the mere information generated by the writing. Yet given the difficulty even the best of the writers in the study has with objectifying thought for the purposes of analysis, it seems reasonable to speculate that the process begun in adolescence takes a long exposure to a literate, elaborated-code educational environment to produce fully mature results. It is not something that can be automatically expected of every eighteen-year-old.

#### 5. Limitations

Like all experimental tasks and situations, this particular design embodies certain assumptions and therefore has certain limitations. First is its artificiality: I can conceive of no writer actually sitting down and predetermining that she will compose three personal experience narratives and then combine them, so that in prescribing a simplified task to showcase certain processes, I have distorted somewhat the natural writing processes of each writer. Second, though it's sometimes useful to treat the individual narratives as Vygotsky blocks, they are in

fact much more complex than brightly colored pieces of wood, capable of manipulation and interpretation and actual metamorphosis, and possessing more complex affective values than blocks of wood. Third, as I noted in Chapter 2 and an earlier section of this chapter, the writing process is distorted by the protocol situation itself.

Fourth, the task itself is by design extensive. It's possible that the writers simply ran out of energy, inspiration, and interest after numerous (up to eleven) sessions working on the same piece of writing. A weary and bored writer will probably not expend the kind of intellectual effort required to make steady cognitive progress throughout the entire process. Thus, while the commitment of each of the ten writers to this task was in many ways gratifying, a loss of dedication after a month on one writing task may be reasonably hypothesized. Finally, perhaps the most important point to remember in any study of cognitive processes is Vygotsky's: "For the process [of concept formation] to begin, a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts (Thought 55)." Since this task did not necessarily present a problem which could only be solved with the formation of a new concept, I do not infer a more general lack of cognitive abilities on the part of the participants. In some cases the writer simply did not need to form a concept, and thus didn't.

### Instructional Implications

In general, the major implications of the study for writing teachers is that instruction should be adapted to fit with the above conclusions.

First, the writing process, while extremely idiosyncratic, is in its general outlines the same for all levels of writers. I see no justification for teaching Basic Writers one way, and then, after they have somehow earned the mantle of "adequate writer," teaching them differently. The impulse behind most Basic Writing textbooks even today is still from the bottom up: drill and practice in sentence mechanics, identifying and writing topic sentences and traditionally developed paragraphs from them, and then finally some rules on outlining and developing a three- or five- paragraph essay. Yet, the best college-level textbooks use a top-down, meaning-making, draft-and-revise approach. Where is the line of demarcation?

Second, the importance of elaboration, of training in perception and verbalization of detail, cannot be overestimated. As the study shows, even poor writers can be abstract. In fact, poor writers usually start out abstract, so that training in abstracting is not nearly so important as training in differentiating--moving the other way on the ladder of abstraction. Cognitive development in writing,

again paraphrasing Moffett, does not consist only of greater and greater abstraction (as a study by Freedman and Pringle assumes), but of simultaneously greater and greater differentiation and complexity. In classic advice for Basic Writing instructors, Harvey Weiner, borrowing heavily from Shaughnessy, writes, "Few skills demanded from writers are as important as skill in the use of detail," continuing:

But they [novice writers] must first learn how to construct . . . evidence with language, how to turn perception, idea, and observation into words, how to use words to convey exactly the information the writer wishes to convey. ("Basic Writing" 95)

Perception and rendering of detail is primary.

To fully use the generative power of English syntax, writing instructors must ensure that their students are syntactically fluent. The raging debate over the formal teaching of grammar has grown tiresome, but I will just assert, without getting into the debate, that teaching grammar does nothing to increase syntactic fluency [for the most definitive statement on teaching grammar, see Braddock et al. 37-38; for an historical account of the debate, see Hartwell]. Sentence combining helps some, but the best way to develop fluency is to expose students to perceptive reading of academic and other professional kinds of prose, and engaging them in oral academic uses of language, to let them internalize through hearing and seeing, in meaningful

contexts, the language of subordination and embedding, of logical conditions and temporal relationships. More complex syntax can certainly lead to more complex understandings, but more complex perceptions will employ in meaningful contexts the more complex syntax. Development is simultaneous.

Finally, we know from professional writers (e.g. Murray, "Internal Revision") that revision is the key to going even further beyond the information given. But true revision must be taught. It is not a skill that comes naturally. Mere exhortations to revise produce no revisions. The climate must be established for revision to be seen as natural, not as a punishment, and, furthermore, a wealth of specific strategies for revising must be offered. Revision must begin with a deliberate, conscious questioning of the language that appears on the page, which in turn must begin with the ability to objectify language and thought. And of course all instruction in revision must be tempered with an understanding of just how difficult it is.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

The writing process remains a mystery, despite our recently developed tools to understand it more completely. Protocol analysis gives us glimpses into what is going on in a writer's mind, but even its most ardent supporters readily admit its limitations. Further research, possibly involving

new (even undiscovered and unimagined) research techniques, should be undertaken to begin answering some of the questions uncovered here.

1. One of the discoveries of this study is the extreme differences in elaboration between the Basic Writers and the advanced writers. Why are concepts and experiences so blocklike, so monolithic? Why do they resist analysis and detailing?
2. Even the good writers in the study made no substantial discoveries during revision. Why? More precisely, since we have the models attested to by professional writers and outlined by Murray ("Internal Revision") which insist that discovery takes place during revision, at what level must a writer be before this begins happening?
3. We need good ethnographic data on the impact of discovered superordinations on a writer's non-academic life. Have Denise's thoughts and behaviors towards her camp changed since writing?
4. Since for Basic Writers, it appears that abstractions and generalizations come first and need to be elaborated, we need research into the roles of other prewriting techniques, such as mapping, that allow writers to elaborate rather than abstract.



5. Some decisions and cognitive moves writers make seem to happen almost instantaneously, such as choosing which three to write about. We need research methods and then research to elucidate those microsecond activities.
6. Closely allied with the previous question is the question of instantaneous associations and connections. The best example comes from my own process--as I was watching the TV special on poverty which included the interview with Carolyn Chute, as soon as I heard her trail off and allow the reader to name the concept she had sketched out, I recognized material for this chapter and ran for my notebook. Why?
7. We need to understand the mature process of superordination by conscious juxtaposition, by metaphor, by implication. One searches in vain through Orwell or Didion or E. B. White for explicit, overt superordinations. How does the expert writer move beyond explicitness?
8. What is there in the chore of writing that causes Basic Writers, even when they have through prewriting generated a minimal amount of raw data for elaboration, not to use it in drafts. Why, when the material of writing is available, don't they use it?

When I started writing this, after the data had been collected, I literally had no idea of my conclusions. Not only did I not know what I was looking for (which has caused its share of problems with my committee), I didn't know how I would find it, find anything. It's no exaggeration to say that every conclusion from this study was generated through the process of prewriting (I like maps and scratch outlines), drafting, and much revision. Every bit of meaning made, every connection, every generalization, was discovered through writing. I only wish someone had been protocoling me.

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#### APPENDIX 1

This appendix contains the final drafts produced by the writers in the study. I have regularized the spelling and punctuation, except in cases where doing so would change the meaning.

### Sheila

Elizabeth McKenna was a very imposing and authoritative figure, somewhat of a fixture at the eighth-grade level of our school. She seemed in charge, somehow to our thirteen-yr. mentalities, even more so than the Principal himself. We all knew that she was strict but didn't yet realize that along with that went an accompanying fairness. Not many of us wanted to be assigned to her class, but, as it turned out, all three of my best friends and I were put into her class.

She was one of that generation of teachers who sacrificed her own chances at having a family for the greater goal of teaching hundreds of future students her overall philosophy of living for, not only did she teach academics, but also influenced us heavily by her strong moral character. She always emphasized "strong minds, strong bodies." Therefore each morning we began the day with several minutes of prayer followed by a period of calisthenics to "clear away the cobwebs."

Nancy, Barbara, Linda and I did everything together and were on the same academic level which meant that we were all in the same math group. Math for us, though, was not our favorite subject and at this upper level, Miss McKenna pushed us to achieve much more than we ever wanted to. At times we'd get discouraged and decide to take the easier

route of calling one another on the phone and collaborating on the homework.

Then one day, several months later, after we'd had the opportunity to bond with Miss McKenna, she told one of her character-developing stories, this one about a group of young people who cheated and achieved grades they wouldn't have otherwise. She went on to caution us about doing anything similar so that our self-respect would not be threatened.

"Oh, my God," each of us silently spoke, "is she speaking to us?" We furtively stole glances at each other and others in the room. Eyes were filled with tears as we realized the significance of what we'd been doing. Each of us felt that she had to be the most depraved character who'd ever lived and shared these feelings with one another after school. We decided we would approach her and admit to what we had been doing. As we gathered in the schoolyard the following morning, we were surprised to find other groups discussing the same thing. I took the "bull by the horns" and led the consolidated group of about fifteen upstairs to make our confession. She was busy at her desk and asked us to wait in the adjacent auditorium. We'd seemed like such a large group on our way up to her room, but the coldness and size of the empty auditorium seemed to diminish our size considerably.

I remember telling her, upon her entering the auditorium, that we had all taken her message to heart, had been involved in cheating ourselves, and were very sorry. She appeared to be shocked at first, but immediately comforted us with sympathetic words about our not having ever been the only ones and that we could redeem ourselves by not continuing along the same course. She dismissed us into the classroom and never again mentioned the incident. However, over the next few months she actually seemed to give us more responsibility and allowing us to help out with some of her paperwork after school. She probably did this to prove that she harbored no feelings of distrust in any of us.

Even though we had been spending more time with and growing more fond of Miss McKenna, I was totally surprised the Saturday morning she called and outlined plans for an excursion into Boston with Nancy, Barbara, Linda and me. She said she usually took the highest achievers from her class into Boston to tour the museums and out for lunch. We'd take the train early on a Saturday morning and back again in the late afternoon. That the other girls were also my best friends made it even more exciting. She asked me to get back to her about it after having discussed it with my parents.

We four girls talked about it over the weekend and set a date the following Monday as nobody's parents had any

objections. It was sometime in the spring, probably early May, when we met at the school and were driven to the train station. This was my very first train ride, and just watching the goings on outside the window as we sped along kept me occupied. She wanted to plan the day's activities as we neared the station. Her top priority was the museums, but we persuaded her to shift the focus of the day to shopping in the downtown area instead.

Once there, we dragged her along the main street and in and out of several stores along the side streets as well. We had covered much territory and had become quite ravenous by midday. She wanted to take us to a nice restaurant for lunch, but we talked her into settling instead for greasy hamburgers and french fries and chocolate milkshakes.

After lunch it was such a beautiful day that we spent a couple of hours walking the common but still insisted on getting back to the last stretch of downtown shopping area still unexplored before heading back to the train station for the trip home.

During the trip back home we rehashed the day's activities and talked about how wonderful the day had been for us. Miss McKenna, too, said she'd had a good time even though we hadn't been to even one of the museums as originally planned. Because she said she'd had a good time, I took it for granted that it was so. Sometimes now, though, I think back to that day and picture her soaking her

feet and wondering whether it was worth it and rethinking whether or not to do it again the following year.

Graduation came and went and I had no reason to think I would see or hear from her again. Quite to my surprise, though, I received the most beautiful Christmas card from her, signed in her distinctive scroll--Elizabeth--and each year thereafter until I graduated from high school and received her phone call congratulating me on having graduated with great distinction. She asked me about my plans for college, and I almost considered it a betrayal of some sort to tell her I'd changed my mind about a four-yr. commitment and had decided to go to a two year secretarial school instead.

I could sense her disappointment, but she very graciously offered to help both financially and in whatever way she could so that I would change my mind. I didn't stop to consider what a generous offer she was making; I just didn't want her to challenge me, so I told her my plans were firm. Not wanting to accept that, she made me agree to a meeting at her home, an appointment I never kept. That was the last I ever heard from her.

Elizabeth McKenna is gone now, but memories of her love and generosity and the example of who she was as a human being are memories I will always treasure. I can only look back now and wish I had been able to appreciate her in the same way at the time I could have acknowledged this to her.



## Mark

There are three different times that occurred with my father and I. The first time was when I wrecked his car, which was a learning experience. The second occurred when we were building an aquarium stand; this was the ability to work together. And finally the time when we were talking about vacation; this was considered a good time.

The first time was when I wrecked my father's new car. This instant was an embarrassing and learning experience with my father and I. It was embarrassing because I didn't pay attention to his lectures about driving in bad conditions, and I didn't pay attention to my acts driving his new car.

The second time was when my father and I were building the aquarium stand. This time was very important to me, because I learned an important fact of life, which is the ability to work together. This fact was mainly for the business world, because it shows responsibility to the co-worker and it helps them to relate with each other. This is what my father and I related to.

The third time was when my father and I discussed going on vacation. This time was considered a break from work because it was almost like having a lunch break in between working hours.

These three experiences interrelate to the business world. The driving experience was like a lesson and

learning ability to to better myself. Building an aquarium was considered the ability to work together is an important key in life, because you not only have to work with them, not against them. Finally, having a good time--this separates the pleasure from work.

Elaine

Since the beginning of time the relationship between a mother and daughter has always been regarded as something special. This is true with my mother. She is a generous, caring person and she has a special love for each of her daughters.

My mother and I shared many special moments. There were times that we connected with each other's innermost feelings without saying a word and times when words brought us closer than ever.

I can remember two very special moments between my mother and I that no communication was needed. The first of these occasions happened so long ago I can't remember how old I was or even the time of year. I do remember it was a night warm enough to have the windows open. It was the night they declared the war in Vietnam over, the night the church bells rang.

The conflict in Vietnam hit close to home. My mother's only brother was killed. It was a hard thing to accept, but what made it harder was the fact that he was killed at a time when there should have been no fighting. The helicopter that was taking his troop to the Bob Hope Christmas show was shot down.

On the night the war ended my mother, father, and I went to the back window in my parents' bedroom to listen to the church bells. I was on my knees facing backwards in the

rocking chair. My mother was standing behind me with her hand on my shoulder. When the bells began to chime it seemed like the whole city had come alive. Car horns were blaring and people could be heard cheering from an undetermined distance.

We sat in the bedroom for a few minutes. Then my mother left the room to go sit on the stairs. I knew she was crying and I went to comfort her. We sat together for quite a while, both of us in desperate need of a box of Kleenex. There was nothing to be said.

After we had pretty much cried ourselves, my mother and I returned to the window to listen to the last of the chimes. When they stopped, we hugged each other for a long time. It was one of the most tender moments that my mother and I have ever shared.

There was another time, quite a few years later, that no words needed to be said for us to understand each other's emotions.

It was a night in early fall. My family had gone to Maine for a weekend vacation. We stayed in our favorite motel, a homey kind of place called the Seagull. It stood on a large flat piece of land overlooking the beach and all the beach houses. The view, day and night, was always beautiful. But on the night we arrived our eyes went to the sky rather than to the shore.

The air was cool and comfortable. My family went out to the huge backyard of the motel to enjoy the view. My mother and I looked up to see one of the most breathtaking sights anyone could ever imagine. The sky was a deep black and more stars than I had ever seen before or since were lighting it up. The Milky Way was clearly visible as were many constellations I hardly knew existed.

My mother came to my side and put her arm around me. We stood together both in awe of what we were seeing. I felt as if there was a bond between us. Somehow we were both feeling a sense of peacefulness. We turned to each other and realized that each of us was shedding a tear at the sheer beauty of the sight.

Through all of this, my father surprised me once again by standing quietly. I think he realized we were quite absorbed in the moment and he should leave us alone.

Although I don't really remember the rest of that weekend, I know that sight will always remain with me. I think it was a special experience for my mother as well. For, to this day, I have only to say, "Remember the stars" and she knows exactly what I'm talking about.

As I mentioned earlier, there have also been times that words brought us closer than ever. One time in particular comes to mind.

About four years ago, my mother told me some things about herself that made me feel she was finally accepting me as an adult and treating me as such.

One summer evening we went to Hampton Beach with my youngest brother and my daughter, who was then less than a year old. We were walking along the boardwalk and my brother came over to hug my mother. The only problem was, once he started, he wouldn't leave her alone. I could tell by the look on her face when he first approached her that she was aggravated by this. It had been going on for a long time. He was the baby of the family and she treated him accordingly. She tried a couple of times to shrug him off but he didn't get the hint. She finally told him to walk ahead because there was something she wanted to talk to me about.

Reluctantly he walked ahead a few paces and she started telling me her feelings about the situation. She told me it was upsetting her that she couldn't take a step without him at her heels. She said she didn't quite know how to handle it. I told her she had to stop and think about why he was behaving this way. I pointed out to her that she had been treating him like a baby for so long he didn't understand why she was now acting as if she didn't want him around. I didn't want to hurt her feelings by telling her this, but it was the truth and she asked my opinion.

She asked me if I had any suggestions on how to handle it. I was overjoyed that she was confiding these things to me and actually asking my advice.

I told her she would have to gradually get him interested in things a boy his age should be doing. He had been sticking to her like glue for ten years and I told her it would be a while before he lost interest.

She agreed with what I was saying and told me she realized that she was mostly to blame. She said, for the most part, she just felt guilty about divorcing my father. She thought she was making it up to my brother by treating him like a child half his age.

I understood what she was saying but pointed out to her that dealing with my brother's immaturity would be a lot easier than putting up with my father any longer than she did.

We talked a while longer about the kind of man my father was. She told me some things that had happened between them that she had not discussed with me before.

It was the first time I can remember her confiding in me about such personal things. I felt as if I were talking to a dear friend, and, after all, isn't that what a mother is supposed to be?

Denise

Mopang. That one word brings a myriad of images to mind. It's a smallish lake--set in the northeastern woods of Maine, visited in winter by local fishermen and inf=habited in warm weather by black flies and out-of-state summer folk. My father buily a sturdy pine log cabin for his family back in the late 50's, and I haven't missed a summer there yet. Going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life. It ranged from being a prison to a place whihch taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could confidently handle being alone.

We began going to Mopang when we lived in Rhode Island. It was an all-day affair just to reach the lake, using narrow one and a half lane roads that snaked through the Maine woods. I didn't mind it too much when I was a child, but as I grew older, I resented having to spend my precious free time off from school in such a backwards, boring hole in the wilderness. But until I was sixteen, I was forced to go.

The last summer I had to go, all of my brothers and sisters got to stay home except me and my five year old brother. I wasn't looking forward to spending two weeks in the middle of nowhere with a pesty littel shrimp and two unreasonable parents.



The days dragged by and I marked my term of imprisonment by drawing pencil lines, one for each day, on a beam in the loft. My mother wisely ignored her teenager's moody disposition. To keep us entertained, she suggested that we go for a climb one morning up the mountain that rose in a gentle slope behind the cabin. Not one for physical exercise, I said I would sack out for the morning, but parental pleasure persevered, and I grumbled my way out the door.

It was a hot, muggy day, even under the canopy of the trees, and as we followed a streambed up the mountainside, it felt good to stop occasionally and burrow my face into the moss-filtered water. I began to forget that I didn't want to be there and I started to enjoy the outing.

About halfway up, my father strode on ahead, leaving the rest of us struggling through the dense trees. My mother completely lost all sense of direction and began to yell out for my father to wait for us. She fussed and fumed at him all the rest of the way up the mountain, and for five or six days afterwards. Even now, seventeen years later, she still gets that cold gleam in her eye when we jokingly talk of that day.

We finally reached the top about midday, and searched for a bare spot among the trees so that we could see the lake. I abandoned my teenage cool and climbed a tree to get a better view. It was as if time had been erased.

Wilderness stretched as far as the eye could see without any mark made by modern man. The lake spread out below us, looking like a small wading pond made by Paul Bunyan's boot. The only sounds were the faint calls of the loons and the wind rustling through the pine needles. I snapped a picture with my old Brownie camera, hoping to capture what I felt and saw at that moment.

As we quietly ate lunch, a doe and her fawn appeared at the edge of the clearing. My father remarked at how he wished he had brought along his gun. My mother quickly shushed him. The deer didn't stay long, but they stayed long enough for me to remember them and their wildness and beauty.

We began the trek back down, my mother still fuming about being left behind, my pesky brother still obnoxious, and my father striding on ahead, knowing that all we had to do was head downward and we'd eventually hit water.

That day marked a turning point in how I felt about camp, and I carried that feeling with me through to my own family. When I married, the first place we traveled to was Mopang. Ken was not very taken with the place--he would only stay one night. I guess the two hole outhouse wasn't quite his style. But with time and patience, the place grew on him, and we now spend several weeks each summer there.

Most of our vacations passed uneventfully. Ken and I would make the trip with kids, fishing rods, nightcrawlers

which were dutifully kept cool with bags of ice, bags and boxes of groceries, and duffel bags, all crammed into the back seat of the Jeep. The kids enjoyed what Mopang had to offer, and Ken and I got a chance to relax and recoup. But one trip turned out a little differently.

The day began as every other day had--calm, peaceful, the water as smooth as glass. The kids bounded out of their bunks, raced out of the cabin, and dove off the dock for an early morning swim. Our vacation was nearly over and they wanted to squeeze as much fun as possible into the day before we had to leave.

The morning slipped by, filled with packing, cleaning up the cabin for my brother and his family whose turn it was to use the cabin. To get the kids out of my hair, Ken offered to take them for a last boat ride. I was a little apprehensive because he didn't really know the idiosyncracies of the lake, being city-bred, but I welcomed the peace and quiet. Off they went, life jackets securely fastened on the three year-old, the eight-year-old grumbling that he was too old for one as he shrugged his jacket on.

They had been gone for about a half hour when I went outside for a break and to see how far they had gone. I spotted them tooling around the south end of the lake. As I gazed over the stillness, I saw the wind come down from the north. The sky grew dark and the trees along the shore bent with the force of the wind. Then the wind hit the water.

It was as though a giant had suddenly leaned over and blown across the lake. Waves appeared, growing angrier by the second, spreading across the lake, rushing by me towards the boat that was obliviously putting around at the other end.

By the time the waves hit the boat, I was in a panic. I knew Ken didn't know how to handle the boat in bad weather, and the boat was very old, small, and worm-ridden. The boat began to tack back and forth, and I ran up to the cabin to get the long lens of the camera, cursing all the way because the binoculars had been left at home. Racing back down to the dock, I searched through the lens and could only spot Ken and Kenny in the boat. Kim was nowhere to be seen. An awful feeling hit the pit of my stomach, as the thought burst into my mind that Kim had fallen overboard and Ken was searching for her in the water. I was filled with fear at the thought of losing Kim, and with helplessness at not being there to help find her. I was pulled apart inside--I wanted to run up the hill, get into the car, and drive the mile through the woods to get to where the boat was, but I couldn't bear leaving and not knowing what was happening to them.

At that moment, time seemed to go on forever. The boat kept circling, the sky darkened to a deep gray, the waves churned even more. I would begin to run up the hill to the car only to find that I couldn't bear being away from the sight of the boat, and I would run back to the dock. I did

that five or six times before I finally strengthened my resolve and made it to the car. I tore through the woods over an old abandoned streambed we call a road, adding not a few dents to the fenders and tearing out the bottom of the car on sharp, protruding boulders.

As I pulled into a clearing by the edge of the lake, I saw the boat come in to land, and both kids tumbled happily out. Dripping, they ran excitedly over to me and began to tell me about their adventure. Ken sauntered over to the car and explained that he had tried to zigzag his way home, but the waves were too high so he decided to land instead. He asked why hadn't I any color in my face, and what in the world had I done to the car?! I was too drained to answer, and just let him lecture about the proper use of the car while I gathered my wits. Everyone piled into the car, and we drove slowly back to camp. It was time to finish packing and get on back home. For once it was almost a relief to leave and get back to normal, everyday cares.

But it was rare that I ever wanted to leave. Each trip to Mopang brought something new, a change. Whether it was dealing with a forest fire started by a bolt of lightning, or giving up a ripe blueberry patch to a jealous bear, each time at camp brought its own excitement. Three years ago I grew impatient waiting for Ken's vacation time from work and I decided to take the kids up myself. It would be a new

experience for me, the first time without a male protector to guard me, and I was looking forward to being on my own.

The first couple of days passed uneventfully. Hot, summer days were filled with settling in, fishing, swimming, hiking, and assorted expeditions through the forest, using paths made by assorted furry creatures. The nights were a little lonely, lying in bed, trying to sort out the different sounds of the forest. But the loons would finally lull me to sleep, and early morning would find us up and ready to begin another day.

On the third night, we all fell into bed early, exhausted from the day's workout. Surrounded by the dark, the kind of dark where you can't tell if your eyes are open or closed, I would again begin to wonder at the source of all the night noises. A crashing through the underbrush brought a picture of a moose to mind and I envisioned him crashing his way through the back door. A wildcat's cry came down the mountain, making me imagine the chase and captured prey. A coyote's howl travelled through the trees mournful in his solitude. The chorus of voices lasted for quite a while, before it finally died down.

Just as I dropped off to sleep, a sound broke through, close, as though it was inside the cabin with me. Then more sounds, a moaning, first softly, then building up to a crescendo. It took a while, but I finally got up the nerve

to tiptoe across the squeaking floorboards and out the door to see where the sounds were coming from.

The moon had broken through the clouds, bathing the woods in a soft, misty, light. In a tree not three feet from the back door, sat four owls, two on one branch, two on a lower one, each one taking a turn at calling out their tale of woe. I was filled with wonder, and some fear. The odd superstition that an owl would visit someone to warn him of imminent death came to mind, and here I had four of them outside my door!

But the beauty of the owls overwhelmed my fears, and I sat on the stoop and watched this rare, midnight visit. I quietly slipped back into the cabin to wake the kids, not wanting them to miss this unusual sight. Kim was excited because she got to be up in the middle of the night--a real treat for my six year old. Kenny, being eleven, appreciated a little bit more the wonder of seeing the four owls. From the look on his face, I knew it was something he would remember for a long time. I put them back to bed when they began to shiver from the chill night air, and I went back out to watch the owls until, in one fluid, they flew off into the moonlight, skimming across the light-flecked water. Returning to my bed, I fell into a peaceful, dreamless sleep.

I go confidently now to that still-wild place. Mopang remains today as it appeared in that first photograph I took

with my Brownie. The logging company that owns that part of Maine has begun to shave the neighboring hills of their greenery, but they haven't reached Mopang. Yet. The bear cubs still come looking for fish heads in the early morning hours, and the loons still call out their song in the gray evenings. Where I once played as a child, my own children grow, learn, and play. I look forward to seeing what Mopang has to show me in the next twenty summers.



Lisa

These events which I will mention in this paper is going back to my childhood, showing you what a wonderful childhood this was. At this point in my life, the family was so happy. We had our bad times, but because I was so young I could only see the good times, which was a blessing considering what would take place a few years after this.

The first summer I was six and I remember this vividly. First of all the family went to visit some cousins which to us is called the country in western Mass. This place is usually called Erving, Mass. It is also a hick town. Anyway, one weekend the family went to go visit. This particular time my mother drove up there. I remember being very young. When we started heading up there I was feeling fine. But the radiator started to reek of this fetid odor. I felt like I was going to be sick. The ride was 2 1/2 hours long. There were a lot of people in the car and I was sitting on somebody's lap. It was hot and muggy that day. I felt as though I was suffocating and this made me more nauseous. As the ride went on, I gradually began to get seriously ill. I remember having a splitting headache. I was dizzy and felt sick as a dog. At this point I asked my mother to pull over. As soon as she did I got sick and almost passed out. The fumes from the radiator were too much for me to handle and that's what made me sick.

The next summer when the family went on vacation, we decided to go to the beach. I was seven years old. My grandmother rented a cottage. This one summer in particular seemed like the best time in my life. The family was united and happy. Just playing in the sand was a thrill. I wasn't that aware of what was going on around me. All I know is that I was happy. Even going to the center was an adventure. Everything back then seemed to be huge in appearance. My parents would play all kinds of games and take [us] on the kiddie rides. We would take long walks on the beach and enjoy ourselves. I remember there would be a lot of company and chatter among the adults. It seemed as though my mother and I would be talking alone on a mother-daughter relationship and relating to each other. I see my mother sitting in a lawn chair and smiling, showing me that she was happy and having a wonderful time. At this stage in my life my uncle owned a yacht that wasn't too far from where we were staying. We used to take day trips and get together with a few people and have a good time. I recall seeing my father teach my mother how to fish. I found it hilarious because she didn't know how to put the worm on the hook, but was able to catch a few.

The family in earlier years went to so many different functions where I can see my [mother] walking. She was the outdoor type, that whenever she could be out she would be. For instance, in the summer we would go on picnics,

amusement parks, go to the lake, and swim together. She used to walk me to school. She was active in the women's organization at the school. Going shopping with her whether it was for clothes or food, I used to take off with the shopping cart and my mother would have to chase me down the aisles to get it back. I can see my father walking hand in hand and us kids trailing behind. This was everywhere they went. She was very good to us taking us to the playground so we wouldn't be bored. Going to church was a big event. She used to take all three girls in the church. Sometimes we would get out of hand. She wouldn't let us get away with anything and would discipline us as we needed to be disciplined. One day she fell and didn't know why. It's not that she lost her balance. But she just collapsed. When she went to the doctor's they didn't know what was wrong and started doing some extensive tests and found that she had multiple sclerosis. After that day gradually she declined until she was unable to walk at all.

These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to to what I can remember when my mother was able to walk around, experiencing all wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that was around her at this point in time, to mention a few, walking in the woods, in the city, going dancing, just always being mobile.

Pam

Terri Jean's Experiences with Hospital

This story is about my daughter Terri Jean's experiences wit hospital.

It was only three times. All happened on a Tuesday.

The first was when she was 27 months old. The second was when she was six, and the third was when she she was eleven. The first one was because she went into Amesbury hospital on a Tuesday because she had a very bad rash.

Doctor Mack which was her doctor told us it was due to reaction of dairy products. But, after the stay in the hospital he said he wasn't sure of the real cause.

Terri didn't like the hospital and the bed was a crib with bars that made it look like a cage.

She was sad so my mom and dad bought her a stuffed dog. It was black and brown.

This all happened on a Tuesday. That's also the day she was released. So when she came home my parents got her a real dog, white and black, and called it Tuesday.

The second time was when she was six, maybe a little older by months. She was in first grade and she had the whole day off.

At this time I also had a little baby in the house. This was Charles.

I had laundry to do. I had to do it in a wringer washer. This was in my kitchen by the sink.

While it was rinsing my baby started to cry. I had to attend to his need. I kept yelling to Terri to stay away from the machine. She yelled back okay.

The next thing she was screaming. I ran in. She did put an item through the wringer part and it also took her hand and hair right in. Her arm was in up to her elbow. I pushed the release button for it to let go. I screamed for my sister who was my neighbor at this time. She called the rescue van. They checked her arm and said they didn't think there was any broken bones but I should still bring her to the hospital. So I did. She ended up with a headache due to her hair being pulled through the wringer, also a badly bruised arm and elbow. She had to wear a sling for about 30 days.

Now she doesn't go close to wringer washer, but she will do some of my laundry sometimes, now at the laundromat.

The last and latest time was just recently.

We were camping in West Lebanon, Me. I wanted to go with my three children on a bike ride. They want the ride to be towards the store, which was 3 miles one way. We decided to go the opposite way.

This way we decided to go ended up having a lot of potholes and hills. Terri had a blue 10 speed. Alan had his TMX bike, and I had my 3 speed with a seat for Charles.

As we were riding it was Alan ahead of us, then Terri and I side by side. I kept saying slow down and watch the potholes.

Alan kept going faster so he was out of sight, due to a corner.

Then next thing I knew Terri was flipping over and the bike landing on top of her.

I stopped and before I could put my stand down Charles was off. Terri was screaming. I kept telling her not to move. I started to cry and saw a truck coming up the hill so I waved him down. And he saw Terri. I kept telling her not to move but when the man got out of his truck he told me to get in the back so Charles and I did and he picked Terri up. I didn't realize he did pick her up after I kept telling her not to move. He asked if the boy down the road was mine also. I said yes but he can find his own way home, I hope.

But he waited for Alan. He then asked me where I was staying and I forgot the name of the road so I had to show him by way of talking from the back of the truck to the front.

He never did say his name. He dropped us off and Randall came out. Randall is the name of the campsite owner. He put her in the car, drove her to Rochester, NH hospital. It was the closest.

It ended up 3 hours in emergency and then 3 days in the hospital and 4 days home for bed rest.

She had to have X-rays and special doctor due to a sinus cavity full of blood and a badly bruised face on her left side, also her eye was swollen shut. Also her right side had the fractured jaw due to pressure of hitting her left side over. Plus her chin had three stitches in it.

These parts of Terri Jean's life were all involved with her only times in the hospital. It seems as though it always happened on a Tuesday. So now she [is] very careful on Tuesday. She still has her real dog Tuesday. It's now eleven years old.

Gail

My family and I do a lot of things together. The thing we do mostly is traveling.

Every year we go on some type of trip. We either take day trips or we go away for a couple of weeks.

One year we went to the Mountains. We usually have a nice time, but this one wasn't so great. There was a mixup in the hotel rooms. When we finally got settled, we had to leave early.

My brother in law had an appendicitis attack and got really sick. After we drove him home, the doctors told us it was nothing, but good thing we got him home.

Then there's the time we went to Plymouth. We had fun then. My uncle and aunt and five cousins came along this time. It was a beautiful fall day, and the sights were both educational and fun. We went on the Mayflower and on the plantation. This gave us a chance to see how the pilgrims lived. It also taught me to appreciate the things we usually take for granted.

The best and biggest trip was when we went to Florida for two weeks. The weather was really warm and the beaches were great. We went to Disney World. This is a beautiful place. It was like a fantasy world. The Disney characters seemed to come alive. We've been going back every year since then. We really like to travel, and I hope when I get married I can give my family as much as my parents gave me.



Karen

My Big Sister

Her name is Cheryl. I met her at work 3 years ago. She is a manager. She got transferred from Salem, with the new store manager.

She was a closing manager. We worked together 5 nights a week.

She was best friends with the store manager. She was very outgoing and sometimes easy to get along with. She was well-liked by the crew.

Whenever I had a problem she would ask me what's wrong and we would talk.

After a few months we got closer.

She had only worked in Lawrence for one year. She left when I was a junior in high school. She had worked in Salisbury for the summer and was going to come back in Sept.

At the end of my junior year, I broke my collarbone playing softball. I had to be out of work for 2 months.

The next day I went into see Cheryl, to tell her I wouldn't be back until the end of the summer. That's when she told me she was going to Salisbury.

That Day I went home and wrote her a note, telling her how special she was to me. That is when she adopted me as her little sister.

When she left for Salisbury, I didn't get an address. A week later I got a letter, and for the whole summer we wrote just about every week.

I had gone to work in Hampton McDonald's and Cheryl was there. Two weeks after that she was supposed to come back to work.

September came and the one day I wasn't home, she had come by and left me a card. It was a Care Bear. It said that she wouldn't be coming back, but she would miss me a lot and we would have to keep in touch. I was so upset I started to cry. I had written a letter back and she wrote when she had time. We talked just about every other day.

Then before I knew it, it was Christmas and time for the annual party. It was a great time, but my dress had ripped and I had to go over my store manager's so she could sew it back. Cheryl had been there and she took me home that night.

A few weeks later she came by before work to give me my Christmas gift. It was a Care Bear, plus notebooks and a bubble bath.

After that day we still kept in touch. Then the summer came and she went back to Salisbury.

I visited her once a week with my friend Maria.

When this summer was over, she went back to Hudson and got a promotion to first assistant, which I am very proud of her for.

She still comes in once a week, and I write once a week. We are still just as close and no matter how old I am she still calls me her little sister.

### Roberta

Mothers are constantly telling cute, sweet stories about their offspring. "Oh Johnny was so cute yesterday when he did so and so" or "Mary is so artistic with her little fingerpaints." Mothers and fathers alike normally love to brag about their little darlings. I'm sure my dear mother did her share too, but I am doubly sure there were several things she never told and would sooner forget. In fact I am positive my eighth year of life has been blotted from her mind entirely. Or at least she tried.

Parents talk about their toddlers going through the terrible twos. Of course I don't remember back that far. I never remember my mother recounting any stories about that period of time either. But I can recall when I was eight years of age. Having no children of my own, I have a hard time comparing myself to an eight year old of today. But I am sure there are a few mothers out there that will identify with my rebelliousness.

What would you do if your youngster set a trash can on fire? Or doodled with a knife on your favorite table legs, or better yet tossed sandwiches, and remember you worked hard to buy the food for the house, yes sandwiches over a bridge because he or she didn't like them? Think now! Would that child be living in a cell or be shipped off to Arabia for child slavery. Wait! Even if you still love

that child after all this, I'm sure you will get a kick out of these remembrances of mine.

To this day I can still hear the shrill pitch of Mother's voice when I got home from the movies that afternoon. I knew the jig was up. My attempt at artistic furniture restoration had failed. Remember now, I was only eight years old.

Boredom can have a disastrous effect on a child home from school alone for an entire day. O.K., all you folks out there in your mid thirties, remember when you had the day out of school for President Eisenhower's Inauguration? Second term, I mean. I recall it only too well.

After sleeping late, watching cartoons and talking on the phone to friends, I had managed to waste all of the morning hours, so the logical thing to do was have lunch. After that I was getting fidgety and decided the only thing left was of course the T.V. Remember I said it was inauguration day and that was the only telecast on all three channels. No cable T.V. back then. I can hear all you kids gasping in horror. What, only three channels to choose from? Yup!

Realize now, that politics never thrilled me. I don't know too many eight year olds concerned with the national deficit. After giving the channel selector a whirl, I had to come to grips with the fact that Ike's face was my only choice.

With Mom being at work, I did all the things I wasn't supposed to, like sitting much too close to the T.V.

Fifteen minutes goes by and after listening to some of the dull political leaders of our country drone on about the values of a good government, I decided I needed an apple to break things up. Back to the living room I come with apple and paring knife in hand. I hated apple skins. Hence the paring knife.

After the apple was gone I, for some strange reason, started to run the knife up and down the table legs that held our black and white T.V. The strokes turned into gouges and soon I was totally enthralled in carving out new designs on the legs.

Our furniture was used but Mom did work hard to keep what we had looking nice.

Panic seized my mind when I realized the damage I had done and I knew I was in deep, serious trouble. I had to make amends somehow. What was I going to do?

I had seen my mother touch up furniture with Mercurochrome when she marked or chipped it when she would hit it with the vacuum. I figured if it worked for her, I would give it a try. With the damage I did it might take a gallon or two.

I flung open the door of the medicine cabinet and scouted its contents. There was that blessed little bottle. Don't forget the Q-tips. I had an hour to do my own version

of Rembrandt and to my surprise the patch job wasn't too bad.

But who was I fooling? Two days later when she was doing the dusting she found the marks and my goose was cooked. I can hear you readers screaming, "Lock the kid up and throw away the key." O.K., now that I've got you hooked here's one that will make your skin crawl.

Same kid, same house, only summer vacation. The kid is home alone again. Bored again and perfect bait for trouble. The summer was winding down. It was August and all my friends and their parents were away enjoying the last weeks of summer. Yes, Mom was at work again, and you may ask why this kid didn't have a babysitter. Lots of eight year olds can take care of themselves, Mom thought. But there are exceptions to any rule.

Most of my summer days were taken up with swimming lessons and crafts and such. But this particular day I didn't feel like going. I didn't feel like watching soap operas or game shows or the news either, so I made some soup for lunch. I wasn't supposed to fool with the gas stove when I was alone. But that never stopped me. I was fascinated by the blue color of the flames and by lighting those Ohio Blue Tip matches. The soup was good but those matches I really liked. Even as I lit one after another a tiny voice in the back of my mind said, "Don't even think of it." But I never listened too well anyway.

God only knows what compelled me to do what I did, but before I knew it I was ripping up paper towels, lighting them and throwing them into the steel trash can that stood by the sink. I lit one after another, and before I even realized it, the house was filling with smoke. I quickly grabbed the sprayer on the sink and began extinguishing the flames.

How was I going to explain this one? If the door was damaged by a fireman's axe when Mom came home, what would I say? They forgot their key? No good. I didn't want Mom to have to buy a new door. Thank God the windows had been open. That took care of most of the smoke. I soaked a towel and fanned the smoke in the direction of the windows.

Then there was the mess to contend with. The only place I could think of to throw the charred, soggy paper towels was down the toilet. I gave it a flush and sent my dastardly deed flowing under the streets of the town. I cleaned the can, the floor, and every telltale sign of ash I could find, and then proceeded to empty a can of air freshener to top off the effect of any remaining odors. Two days later I was in front of my mother and the landlady confessing to why we had plumbing problems, and counting my blessings that I would live to see another day.

Yes, and I did live to see another day. Yet another day I would rather forget. It was that same year, in fact. It was fall, as beautiful fall as I remember. I was off to



another day of school. I grabbed my school bag and Cinderella lunch kettle, and bounded down the front steps of my apartment building. The walk to school was usually boring, but the change in the weather made the scenery more interesting. The air was crisp and the leaves were dazzling me with their last brilliant show of colors. The worst part of the walk was trudging up the long hill past St. Michael's Church and over the railroad trestle. I had walked this path so many times I had never even noticed what charm this old trestle gave the town.

The bridge over the railroad tracks brings back many memories. Funny how objects we take for granted every day can flood back facts long forgotten. Happy, sad, scary.

In the spring and early summer one of my favorite stops was the mulberry tree at the opposite end of the bridge. I always managed to stuff my chubby little face with lots of mulberries and usually leave telltale stains on my clothes.

The bridge spanned a deep gorge where two sets of railroad tracks ran below. As a habit I always looked over the side every day, on the way to school and on the way back. As if something would change during the course of the day. My friends and I used to make up stories about bums and hoboes and trolls that we thought might live under the bridge. School was so boring we had to do something to spice up our dull small town existences.

The high points of our days were recess and lunch time and lately even lunch was ho-hum. We would compare lunches. The entire world was eating baloney. I must have had it for a solid week. It must have been on sale. Not to strike a pun, but Oscar Mayer and I had to end our affair. If I brought the sandwich home, I would probably be forced to eat it for supper. No way! Action must be taken. I had tried complaining about it to the management, but to no avail.

So one afternoon on my way home I stopped to gaze over the side of the bridge to ponder my dilemma. I thought about the situation and the alternatives, and most of all, the consequences and all of a sudden, it was like a flash out of the blue. Chuck the baloney to the great railroad god and consider it a sacrifice. If there were hoboes and trolls at least they would learn to hate baloney as I did. And so I created a delicatessen's nightmare. I would make my offering to the trolls every time baloney was on the menu. God, I hoped someone or some thing was down there swallowing these things or the pile would start to catch up with me.

I knew I was going to be in deep trouble if Mom ever caught wind of my antics. I wouldn't have to ever worry about walking to school because I'd be on crutches. And I may need the services of the chiropractor who owned the property on the other side of the street.

I had some fast explaining to do but realized I couldn't weasel my way out of this one.

It seems a friend of hers had witnessed me making my baloney sacrifice one afternoon and had filled her in on all the details. I was doomed, so the naked truth was the only way out. The wooden spoon and I had become very close that afternoon and I soon had to make my excuses to the trolls and hoboes and lose sleep at night wondering if they were experiencing baloney cravings. I once again resumed my affair with Wonder bread, mustard, and Oscar Mayer.

So parents, ask yourselves how you would handle such a situation. The mere fact that I am even here to recount these tales is one answer to a mischievous child. What avenue will you take? I mean something legal. Like I said, I have no children, only for fear that they will be like me at eight years old.

### Hillary

Numerous problems with my 1979 Ford Mustang have forever changed my outlook on automobiles. Over my five year ownership period, I experienced difficulties, both cosmetic and mechanical. I have acquired some minimal automotive knowledge and more awareness of an inanimate object's personality and moods. That particular car disliked me.

Within the first week of possessing the vehicle, portions of the paint started to bubble. I returned it to the dealership, who touched up those areas as needed and I thought the problem was resolved. Over the period of the original warranty, I returned the car twice more for the same reason. I spoke with several other dealership customers who also had bubbling paint and submitted irate letters to the district manager in hope of getting the paint corrected for good. My letters and photographs were never acknowledged and despite assurances that this was a factory defect, the dealership was unable to service this problem after 12,000 miles without charge. I was very dismayed that portions of a new car, especially after an anti-corrosion treatment, could look like a cancerous appendage in so short a period of time.

After my warranty expired and the courteous dealership could not service my vehicle free, I attempted to alleviate the problem myself. I tried Ford touch up paint, sanding,

repainting, and sealing with clear nail polish, but my results were no better than the dealership's. The bubbling areas bubbled contentedly until the day I traded in the car for a new truck. Now, whenever I was my truck, I am very careful to look for bubbles or striations.

Another significant difficulty occurred about 2 1/2 years into my tenure as a Ford owner. One cold February morning, during rush hour on Route 93, on my way to a new job, the car died. I was, fortunately, able to cruise into the breakdown lane but unfortunately unable to restart the car. Several failed attempts led me to believe that something significant had happened and that unassisted, I would not be able to start the car. Naively, I walked to the nearest mototist aid call box and activated it. I had several offers of rides to a service station but did not wish to abandon the car. Back in the car, I waited and got colder. Eventually, I rerrieved a beach blanket from the trunk, then waited some more and got even colder. Frightened of wearing down the battery, I only listened to the radio sporadically.

After a couple of hours, a state trooper on patrol stopped to assist me. Due to my state of agitation and cold, I was somewhat less than courteous to him and waited in my car until a tow truck could arrive. Fortunately, my family had done business with the station I requested and the truck not only towed my car but also gave me a ride to

my parents' house. Upon arrival, I found my mother on the phone with my boss. I assured them both that outside of being slightly frostbitten and very irritated, I was fine and that I had had no intention of not continuing my employment.

I was unable to get to Somerville but I did not wish to lose a whole day's pay. My previous employer still utilized my services on a consulting basis, so I got a ride there. Once at work, and slightly distracted from the experience, I received a major shock. The service station called and notified me that the engine had been blown and would have to be replaced. somehow I was not prepared for anything that critical. The car had only 48,000 miles and I had never abused it with high speed driving or neglected maintenance. Initially, panic overwhelmed me as I tried to financially calculate a feasible solution. After attempting to refinance through the dealer's bank and considering borrowing from friends, I took a loan from my new employer.

The engine was replaced with a slightly used 4 cylinder from a totalled Granada. After that my attitude towards the car changed significantly. Initially, I heard squeaks and rattles and grinding that wasn't really there. Shortly thereafter I began to drive faster and longer distances because it occurred to me that taking all the precautions wouldn't protect me. I came to the belief that the car was

a lemon and no matter what I did or didn't do, it was doomed.

The following September, I agreed to drive to Michigan with a friend. Prior to the engine being replaced, I probably wouldn't have considered such a trip and I had serious misgivings about the distance but was determined not to let that car ruin my life. This journey would strengthen many of my feelings about this car in particular and all automobile travel in general. The trip, as planned, would have been long in any vehicle but in the Mustang it proved to be arduous, unnerving, and almost painful.

We started out in high spirits, the car packed full with three people, clothes for one week, a few gifts and some refreshments for the first stage of our journey. With maps provided by AAA, we proceeded smoothly across Massachusetts, up the length of New York, and across some sparsely inhabited Canadian provinces, stopping only for gasoline and restroom facilities. Howard Johnson's provided food, fuel, a stretch, and facilities to assist us in our futile attempt to rehumanize our outward appearance. The car's fixed-position, vinyl seats did nothing to improve our looks, smells and overall attitude.

When we re-entered the United States, we were detained at customs for a routine inspection. Perhaps we were tired and scruffy looking, or perhaps the car just looked suspicious being so full, but they searched all our luggage

and the entire car inside and out, then let us go. The detention had cost us about an hour so we increased our speed to get back on schedule.

The first stop was relatively uneventful, except for the cramped legs and backs. I assuaged my nervousness by checking everything I knew how to and surmised (and hoped) that all was as well as could be. One night's rest for us and the Mustang, then we headed north to CMU. The highways were well taken care of, not crowded, and sparsely patrolled. We took advantage of this in an attempt to arrive before sunst, as we were unsure of the dorm's exact location. While driving, I listened to squeaks and rattles tht I should have heard without typical road interference. I was vaguely satisfied to hear nothing out of the ordinary.

At the dorm, we piled out and stretched as vigorously as possible. I realized that the car needed some serious cosmetic attention. The interior was littered with empty cofee cups and cigarette packs, not to mention wrappings and crumbs that seemed to be regenerating. The exterior was splattered with grime and tar, not to mention bird leavings and tree sap. With a hose and a trash bag and some serious scrubbing, the car regained some of its characteristics. Even the bubbling rust spots were visible enough to invite comments and suggestions.

Again one night's rest then onward to our last stop before home. This portion of the drive was not on new or



well-kept thoroughfares. The roads were bumpy and hilly and by the time we arrived the car was tired and running ragged. The homeward journey would prove to all of us that a Mustang was meant for looks, not practicality. On the home trip I attempted to sleep in the passenger's seat for the first and last time. I curled and twisted and finally dozed off. I was awakened by the downshifting of the gears as we encountered some New York traffic. I have been accused of sleeping through explosions but those gears woke me up.

Finally home, again there was plenty of cosmetic attention necessary, including trying to repaint again. Outside of needing a quart or so of oil, a front end alignment, and resetting the timing, the car was as mechanically as good as ever. Overall, I would never repeat that trip in a [car] that size or with that serious a previous history. The physical discomfort compounded by the uncertainty of reliability detracted from the vacation.

Today I drive a Toyota pick-up truck, with the extended warranty. I go however far I want, driving at 55 mph to avoid moving violations, not to protect the engine. I would never drive a Ford again even as a rental and when I leave New England, I fly.

## APPENDIX 2

For a study I'm doing, I recruited ten volunteer students from NECC and asked them to write an essay which contained three personal narratives and attempted to form some generalization to relate all three narratives. Five of the students were Basic Writers and five were from more advanced writing classes (Comp II and Creative Writing).

The following ten sentences were taken from those essays. They are what I'm calling the "superordinations," that is, those generalizations which most nearly sum up or encompass the meaning of the essays. If you like, you may think of these sentences as "thesis" statements.

What I'd like for you to do is to decide which five of the ten sentences are the work of the the Basic Writers and which five are the work of the more advanced writers, and then explain briefly why you made your choices--what characteristics of the sentences led you to your decisions.

[To ensure that the readings you do are truly blind readings, I have numbered the sentences, changed any personal references such as names, corrected the grammar, spelling, and punctuation (where such correction was possible without altering the text itself), and typed them.]

1. "There are three different times that occurred with my father and me. The first time was when I wrecked his car, which was a learning experience. The second occurred when we were building an aquarium stand. This was the ability to work together. And finally the time when we were talking about vacation--this was considered a good time."
2. "After a few months we got closer."
3. "Numerous problems with my 1980 Chevrolet Citation have forever changed my outlook on automobiles. Over my five year ownership period, I experienced difficulties, both cosmetic and mechanical."
4. "My mother and I shared many special moments. There were times that we connected with each other's innermost feelings without saying a word and times when words brought us closer than ever."
5. "These events which I have just discussed mostly pertain to what I can remember when my sister was able to walk around, experiencing all the wonderful and beautiful atmospheres that were around her at this point in time. To mention a few, walking in the woods and in the city, or going dancing, just always being mobile."
6. "This story is about my daughter Tracy Ann's experiences with the hospital. There were only three times, and they all happened on a Tuesday."
7. "Going to camp meant different things to me depending on where I was in my life. It ranged from a prison to a place which taught me how much my family means to me. It helped me grow from an insecure youth to one who could confidently handle being alone."
8. "My family and I do a lot of things together. The thing we do mostly is travel."
9. "Martha Alexander is gone now, but memories of her love and generosity and the example of who she was as a human being are memories I will always treasure."
10. "But I am sure there are a few mothers out there who will identify with my rebelliousness."

### BASIC WRITERS

For each of the five you have chosen as Basic Writers, list its number and describe what in the sentence makes you choose it as a Basic Writer's.

Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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### ADVANCED WRITERS

Now, for each of the five you have chosen as Advanced Writers, list its number and describe what in the sentence makes you choose it.

Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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Number \_\_\_\_ What features of the sentence make you say so?

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