

The Effect of Guided Journal Writing on
Community College Students of
Technology

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects of journal writing on students in community college classes, not only to assess and remediate their writing skills, but more important, to determine what their writing reveals about their lives, their outlook on their careers, their personal sense of freedom, and their choices and options as young adults.

By looking critically at the writing over time, the author gains an awareness of how guided journal writing can contribute to their development as writers, both personally and academically.

The research involved a response questionnaire for each student, reading and analyzing their journals, sharing journal entries in class and conferring with each student over time.

For the analysis, the students' journals were examined in terms of the variety of material covered, personal expression and interest, and sophistication in dealing with topics. However, the students cannot be compared on the basis of the same assignments, for while some of the journal entries came about as a result of a prompting, there was also writing that was spontaneous.

The study attempted to identify other important skills that the students may have gained, including improvement in writing style, increase in knowledge of subject matter, and growth in appropriate language usage. By noting this information obtained from each student, as well as by recording observations from the class

and from interviews, the author has attempted to holistically assess the level of performance of each of the students.

The position taken by this author is that journal writing is an important process, verified by the wide application of this genre in the classroom setting. However, the position that is presented in this thesis is that in classrooms, journal writing should be introduced, but should not be made a burdensome part of the course. Students should be helped to enjoy writing in their journals, encouraging them even further to continue to engage in the act of writing. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to express their feelings and record their reactions freely. While teacher response is essential, this should be done in a constructive manner, through suggestion and not prescription. Students should be given autonomy over their work, and should at all times retain ownership. Any suggestions or comments that are made should not change the basic structure of what the students has achieved. Journal writing should be incorporated into as many classroom settings as possible, in interesting and creative ways.

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INTRODUCTION

Intentions to write about something in particular can be evoked or created by writing about whatever comes to mind at that moment. At the other end of the spectrum lie 'all the manifold deliberate intentions such as practicing comprehension tests for the exam, or writing a journal three times a week, or any decision to do this or that.' These intentions can come from students as well as from teachers. At best, some will come from students, some will come from teachers, and some will be negotiated between teachers and students. When the action and interactions of the classroom reflect a genuine mutuality of intentions, the teaching/learning process will occur in its most powerful forms, and the participants in those classrooms will experience the fullest satisfaction with their work.

This will be so because both students and teachers will share a commitment to relationships and to learning. The spontaneous writings of students and the support and sympathetic responses given to them by teachers will enable the commitment to a relationship to develop, and this relationship, in turn, will permit the negotiation of planned, long-term work activities to occur.

(Fulwiler, 1987: 18)

My rationale for this thesis was to examine the effects of journal writing on students in my community college classes, not only to assess and remediate their writing skills, but more important, to determine what their writing reveals about their lives, their outlook on their careers, their personal sense of freedom, and their choices and options as young adults.

By looking critically at the writing over time, I hoped to gain an awareness of how guided journal writing could contribute to their development as writers, both personally and academically. It would also suggest to me, as an instructor, areas of need, where greater emphasis could be placed in my own teaching, and important implications for future classes in which I would incorporate guided journal writing.

My students are enrolled in the Faculty of Science and Technology at a suburban community college which serves the regions of Halton and Peel, and comprises one of the largest student bodies at 70,000. In the Faculty of Science and Technology, there are a total of 1,450 students registered currently for the 1995-1996 year.

My classes are comprised of Architectural Design Technicians, Mechanical Engineering and Animal Care Technician students. The average age is twenty-two and the ratio is 60/40 male to female. Eighty-five percent of my students have entered with their high school diplomas, and the remainder are a mix of foreign students and students who have decided to return to school.

The Region of Halton and Peel encompasses a large area that covers 2,800 square kilometres stretching from Burlington to Mississauga. College studies show that the level of education is higher in this area than for the provincial average. This in turn is reflected in this region having a higher percentage of university and post-graduate students. When I look at my students, I see a culturally diverse classroom population which adds to the vitality of the group and often acts as a stimulus for writing and discussion.

With budget cuts becoming a way of life in education, one must rely on more and more imaginative means of dealing with students and encouraging students and faculty to be creative in the classroom. I find that with such a diversity of culture, background, and age in my room, there is a complex community for learning. This can be illustrated by the following chart indicating heritage and ethnic backgrounds:

**MAIN ACTIVITY PRIOR TO ATTENDING COLLEGE IN THE
LAST TWELVE MONTHS**

Secondary School, full time.....	34.5%
Secondary School, part time.....	3.2
College, full time.....	6.0
College, part time.....	1.0
University, full time.....	4.7
University, part time.....	.7
Upgrading development studies.....	1.4
Working full time.....	22.0
As a homemaker.....	1.7
Working part time.....	6.8
Seeking work, while unemployed.....	3.9
Other.....	2.5
Any combination.....	11.6
	100%

The chart shows the distribution of students in the community, with the table explaining the main activities of the students attending the college within the previous twelve months.

The programs are one or two years in length, and the prime goal of the college is to help these students become prepared for the work force, to graduate students that can begin a job and start producing as workers. One reason I

began this study is that so little is known about the community college student. It seems that effort and time have been spent in producing graduates but little has been done in examining their lives. This thesis attempts to clarify the picture by looking at the effect of guided journal writing on community college students of technology.

I believe that the use of guided journal writing also runs parallel to the college's objectives, as set forth in the College's "Vision into Action" report for the years 1995-1996: "... to ensure responsive quality education and objectives and to provide programming and services that address diverse learner needs." Guided journal writing clearly addresses these objectives, because it allows the students to address their own needs, and express in their writings their own concerns. The college is moving to an outcome-based program, with the introduction of innovative instruction and resource-sharing. Along with this, the college is stressing flexible delivery of support systems and employment success.

Guided journal writing can therefore be seen as a means whereby students are able to incorporate their new experiences into their lives, to express their responses and to develop literacy skills. Journal writing can bring reflection to life experience.

My rationale for this thesis was to examine the effects of journal writing on students in my community college classes, not only to assess and remediate their writing skills, but more important, to determine what their writing reveals about their lives, their outlook on their careers, their personal sense of freedom and their choices and options as young adults.

My research focused on seven students in my community college technology class. These students came from different cultural backgrounds, both male and female, and ranged from 19 to 29 years. We engaged in journal writing as a group, and met twice per week on this activity.

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Having read extensively about guided journal writing and having used this process in teaching my technology courses, I decided to undertake this study for several reasons: I wanted to see if at the college level guided journal writing could accomplish many of the benefits that appear to be achieved at other levels of education. I felt that, if I were able to study my class's reactions to guided journal writing, I would be able to determine the expectations I could have with respect to incorporating this methodology in future classes.

Although many studies have been completed on journal writing, I discovered that not many have been focused at the college level. Those completed tended to be geared towards acquisition of knowledge concerning particular subject matter, rather than being concerned with critical thinking, writing style and expression.

The practice of journal writing has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, as teachers from kindergarten to university employ this technique with a variety of results. Journal writing has been linked to improvement in writing skills, to facilitating learning among various subjects, with self-expression, and as a means of building relationships and sharing experiences,

and has also been seen as a means of acquiring writing skills, mastering content, and learning English as a second language.

In my classes, I saw journal writing as a strategy for learning subject material, for self-expression and self-revelation, for sharpening writing skills, developing critical thinking, for getting to know others, and for sharing. Studies that have been done on the efficacy of journal writing have taken place on an ongoing basis, with the laboratory being the classroom, a natural situation, considering that journal writing is concerned with process and not product, learner-centered and learner-oriented.

My research involved a response questionnaire for each student, reading and analyzing their journals, sharing journal entries in class and conferring with each student over time. For the analysis, the students' journals were examined in terms of the variety of material covered, personal expression and interest, and the sophistication in dealing with topics. However, the students cannot be compared on the basis of the same assignments, for while some of the journal entries came about as a result of a prompting on my part for the students to consider certain subjects, there was also writing that was spontaneous.

The study attempted to identify other important skills that the students may have gained, including improvement in writing style, increase in knowledge of subject matter, and growth in appropriate language usage. By noting this information from each student, as well as by recording my observations from class and from interviews, I have attempted to holistically assess the level of performance of each of the students. It was my hope that students would write personally in journals, that they would share these journals to the extent that they felt trusting

of those who would listen, and that their journals would reflect their cultural backgrounds.

As a teacher, the information would help me provide the students with a learning that would make my course more effective in helping them achieve their goals, and I believed that by examining these individuals, I would be able to better appreciate their dreams and frustrations.

Since I anticipated that there would be students who might not be as enthusiastic about course work as others, I felt that the introduction of writing could act as a means of helping these students become more personally involved in their work. While part of my interest in doing this study was to see how guided journal writing fares at the college level in light of the studies that were done at other educational levels, I also wanted to examine my own performance in teaching the class, and how this could be improved. By seeing what the students were accomplishing and achieving, I would be able to determine how to modify the course. This study would help me to assess, at the beginning of the course and throughout the program, the needs of the students and how best I could address these. Since teaching must involve continuous learning, the use of guided journal writing allowed me the opportunity to expand my own learning as well.

At the same time, I hoped to develop students who were more independent in their studies. As mentioned earlier, guided journal writing puts a great deal of responsibility on the students for deciding in which activities they would engage. It also meant that students would have to take the initiative for this part of their course work.

I also saw the journal writing as a means of changing my way of thinking. Rather than by lecturing and providing the students with material which they are expected to learn and then retell on an examination, I felt that journal writing would develop more critical thinkers, improving the way that I teach and the way in which students learn. I hoped too, that my students would benefit from this process, that they would use journal writing not only for helping them to improve their school writing, but as a problem solving tool, expressing the way they feel about experiences and events, helping them to be better able to see the whole picture and perhaps make intelligent decisions.

Many researchers and myself believe that journal writing is an exceptional tool because of the benefits for the classroom. They believe that the educational system in today's society should present the student with greater opportunities for developing life skills than it did in the past. The present educational system was created in an age when it was believed that teachers had knowledge which they were expected to impart to the students. Since then, much has evolved, and students are seen not as absorbers of knowledge, but rather as co-creators of such knowledge. What is perceived as knowledge also varies, for in the past, much knowledge was static, and today, knowledge is considered dynamic. My objective was, therefore, to encourage students to be investigative and to take control of their learning.

Guided journal writing may also be beneficial for often encouraging reluctant readers to become more involved in the reading process. Johannessen, writing about "A Place Called School", contends that John Goodlad "recommends reorganizing schools and classrooms to revitalize the curriculum and promote

student inquiry." But Johannessen (1994) claims that the solution is not that difficult:

While Goodlad and other educational reformers produce elaborate plans and schemes for bringing about change in schools, I think they all may be overlooking an important and simple step that can be taken to help improve our students' ability to improve and write about literature (Johannessen, 1994:66).

He recommends ways of breaking the old habit of quizzes and questions that really have nothing to do with promoting the student's ability to comprehend and develop critical thinking, and seldom encourage the students to write. For example, after reading certain literature passages, the student might be encouraged to write about the relevance of the theme in his or her life (Johannessen, 1994:70).

In general, teachers in all subject areas, from history and literature to psychology and biology, have found that when students write about course readings, lectures, discussions, and research materials they understand better what they know, don't know, want to know--and how it all relates to them. In elementary classes, as well as in high school and college, when students study science, math, and reading, they log what they are learning about science, math, and reading in their journals. Teachers commonly ask students to read aloud voluntarily from their journals to help start class discussions or clarify for each other points of confusion or differing interpretation. In short, journals are active, methodical records of student thought and opinion during a given term, meant to help students prepare for class discussions, study for examinations, and write critical papers.

In addition, English and language arts teachers commonly assign journals to help students learn to write formal assignments. Here student writers keep journals for many of the same reasons as professional writers: to find and explore topics; to clarify, modify, and extend those topics; to try out different writing styles; to sharpen their powers of observation; to practice fluency; and in general to become more aware of themselves as writers.

(Fulwiler, 1987: 6)

CONCLUSION

Guided journal writing, as I envisage its use in my classes, is an important tool in instruction - positive, flexible and useful. Not only does journal writing give the opportunity for students to express themselves, cope with frustration, and to learn about themselves, it also helps them to learn about writing. Students may be required to keep journals in different subject areas and this may help them to improve their understanding of the subject matter. Journals are also seen as important in the development of self-concept, self-esteem, as well as in developing a greater sensitivity to the learning process. Journal writing can help students to take control of their learning, enabling them to develop the independence that facilitates their own acquisition of knowledge.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Journal writing has increasingly been featured in literature as a means of improving not only writing skills, but overall academic functioning. It has also been hailed as being conducive to better social and cognitive functioning (Murky, 1984). As a teacher, I was intrigued by the possibility of not only teaching writing skills, but of helping my students to develop academically, socially and personally. I consider it the responsibility of the teacher to see the student as a whole person and to concentrate on promoting holistic development. As Bereiter observes: "Education is a matter of purpose and focus. To educate is to act with the purpose of influencing the development as a whole person" (Bereiter, 1990:6). This is exactly as I see my role as a teacher.

However, to achieve this, the student must be central to the process, and must take the initiative with the teacher's support. Booth and Wells point out that teachers should develop 'communities of inquiry' to serve the students, because it moves the process of learning from teachers to students (1994:23-28).

Students are able to use writing to explore, construct and reflect upon new ideas. As Fox and Fox contend, journal writing teaches writers to be critical:

Encouraging writing in the expressive mode is a useful teaching method in creating a climate for student explorations and discovery (Fox and Fox, 1990:54).

Using journals may encourage reluctant older readers to become more involved in the reading process. Too often we hear teachers complaining about failing students: "They tend to avoid reading for pleasure and read required

texts reluctantly, usually with the intention of completing the assignment as quickly as possible" (Kletzien and Hushion, 1992:444). However, the use of a reading program with journal writing in similar situations led to the development of better literary skills for these students.

Apart from actually learning skills, students who were encouraged to keep journals also experience improvement in their critical thinking. According to Moffett and Wagner, students who keep journals and later share them with the class or with others "...discover that their reactions or interpretations may not be the only ones justified by the text" (Moffett and Wagner, 1991:77).

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF JOURNAL WRITING

Any attempt to study journal writing should start with the question, "What is journal writing," since there are many different ways of keeping a journal. Journal writing can follow different formats, ranging from the writing of personal accounts, stories, reflections, either on one's initiative, or through participation in a classroom project. According to Simons:

The journal is a word and a deed, a collection of words and deeds of a self in dialogue with itself seeking to articulate its inner word and to embrace it. In retrospect it is our story but in its moments of making it is our process and our being. The journal is a deed and only when it has been a deed many times over does the accumulation become a history (Simons, 1975: 11).

A journal is something very personal, for it involves a dialogue within oneself that elicits a written response. It is our writing to ourselves and this usually takes place at special moments in our lives. "Not infrequently the journal is a place

where tender new growth is privately and secretly nourished, away from the burning eyes and the blasting voices of others" (Simons, 1975:12).

Since it takes place in special moments, and records our secret desires, wishes, ambitions, and feelings, it is a kind of writing that requires solitude, writing that goes to the soul of the individual; therefore, reflected in the writing are the very personal responses of the individual. It is not unusual to find in personal writing stories of oppression, for it is in personal writing that people tend to reveal their feelings without reservations. "It is not coincidental that oppressed minorities who begin to demand social change move quickly to telling their stories and writing their histories" (Simons, 1975:14). Freire (1970) reveals that writing is seen as an important means of the individual coming to terms with whatever problems he or she might have, and of expressing his or her oppression. Very often this writing might be an expression of frustration with a situation, and although the writing might not be able to change the situation, it can help the individual work through those difficulties being encountered, allowing the writer to sort out personal feelings. Simons also points out that some students feel uncomfortable sharing their writing, and will only share with a very close friend or trusted person. He notes that this supports the claim that most journal writing is very personal.

The journal is a record that could be reviewed on a regular basis by the writer, establishing a point of reference. The keeping of a journal can have a stabilizing effect or influence on the individual. It may also help in the building of self, for the individual has the opportunity to look back at responses to a particular situation.

(Simmons, 1975: 18)

Simons also points out one of the advantages of journal writing:

From a wholly different perspective, journal keeping has a meditative, ruminative quality about it" (1975:17). It gives the individual the opportunity to take time out for himself and to think about who he is. The individual has the opportunity to look back; ...Journal keeping precipitates change. Simply to record our behaviour is to interfere with it. It is to see ourselves from a new promontory, to adjust our self-image and inevitably to give rise to new priorities in our habitual ways of acting. In this respect making entries in a journal is like taking snapshots and measurements of one's self (Simons, 1975:18).

The definition of journal that has been used is one that involves the individual writing under his/her own initiative, expressing ideas that are not for anyone else to see. However, there is journal writing that is required by the teacher, which involves personal response, but at the same time is monitored. Regardless of whether the journal was motivated by the individual or requested by the teacher, it demonstrates the characteristics of expressing one's personal response to a situation. More than anything else, effective journal writing can help the individual gain an understanding of self. Journals, as pieces of autobiographical writing, are a form of thinking:

...Thinking does not necessarily imply the design and construction of the big picture of one's life, but through the use of episodic memory the dramatization of selected vignettes from the past may be sufficient to occasion that penetration into the slippery notion of reality that is our experience (Graham, 1991:40).

In other words, autobiography allows the individual to look back on life in terms of episodes, and journal writing usually deals with a response to a specific situation. And as Graham points out, it gives the individual the chance to express themselves and those aspects of their life than might be bothering them (Egan, 1984:36).

Stanley (1989) notes that, by studying what students write in their journals, teachers may realize how they are thinking, and recognize how they are using language. Stanley has students analyzing their own language, looking for the various words they use to describe their experiences. By encouraging them to study the language they use in their journals, teachers could encourage students to choose the precise words that carry more meaning.

Journal writing is seen as a means of helping students to improve their intellectual development. Studying theories on cognitive development, Toni-Lee Capossela (1992) believes that journal writing gives the individual the opportunity to explore not only his/her feelings, but also his/her ability to express ideas. He studied the writing of first year university students in composition class and discovered that the students were not only learning how to express themselves, but that they were getting better at the writing process as well. Thus, the students were developing intellectually as well as emotionally.

Huff and Kline (1987) believe that journal writing "fosters cognitive growth," because it makes the writers more sensitive to the world around them. Other writers tend to agree. Sommer describes writing "...as a way of discovering, of creating, and, in effect, of making the world and the self seem real" (Sommer, 1989:115), for as the student begins to write, he begins to rethink concepts and ideas.

For the student keeping a journal, a spiral begins to open outward; as his sensitivity is increased through writing, so his ability to write develops; as his writing ability develops, so his sensitivity and understanding and awareness increase .

(Sommer, 1989:115)

As mentioned earlier, journal writing could be either initiated by the student or the teacher. If the keeping of the journal is set as a classroom task, then it is intended to elicit the students' response to the course material. Robinson-Armstrong points out that:

research indicates that student journal writing promotes the development of independent thinking as well as writing skills. Journal writing helps students comprehend course material, relate course content to their own lives, and prepare for class discussions.

(Robinson-Armstrong, 1991: 52)

Yet, even when the journal writing is assigned, students still include personal information, for this is the nature of journal writing. Singer claims that even when students are assigned journal writing that these "tend to elicit intimate feelings and expressions from students" (Singer, 1990:73). Therefore, journal writing, whether assigned or initiated by the students themselves, provides opportunities for intimate personal writing.

WRITING AND THE ADULT STUDENT

There is inherent value in journal writing, and this is expressed by Sommer, who points out that "the value of journal writing to a course with adult students cannot be overemphasized. A journal, as distinct from a diary, is a place for a student to practice writing daily without inhibiting restrictions of form, audience, and evaluation" (Sommer, 1989:115).

According to this author, the whole purpose of having the adult students keep a diary is to promote the idea of journal keeping, where the students could express their thoughts, monitor their improvement and respond personally to discussions. It may also be an excellent way for them to improve their competence in English. Pierce calls attention to other studies that have been used with this community and explain the purpose:

One of the aims of these latter studies is to encourage participants to make use of journals to promote second language writing skills.

(Pierce, 1994:22)

Some teachers, however believe that a diary could be used as a journal for helping students access knowledge that they had acquired earlier. Blanton and Moorman (1993) look at the case of student teachers, and note that when these students are encouraged to use a diary, they are better able to access knowledge that can help them in their instructional activity. These educators focused on how student teachers could better prepare themselves for their role in teaching, and they saw that the diary helped them in using knowledge they had acquired earlier - the diary, then served as a mediational tool. "In other words, a mediational tool was introduced to assist teachers in accessing and applying newly acquired knowledge to make instructional decisions and to develop blueprints for reading instructions" (Blanton and Moorman, 1993:79-80). Diaries were used as journals for adults who were learning English as a second language. Pierce explains that the diaries helped their students to "reflect on their language learning experiences, not only in the classroom but in the home, the workplace and the community" (Pierce, 1994:22).

While this might be the case, there is the issue of teachers being able to read journals to see the changes that are taking place. At the same time, students' journals cannot be used as a means of evaluating their performance. This, however, does not eliminate the possibility of instructors reading the journals and observing their benefits to the students. Sommer claims that although journals are not usually evaluated, that "it may be advisable to copy two or three sample journals to keep on file for reference by instructors who teach the class in the future" (Sommer, 1989:149). Therefore, the value of looking at samples of journals is important to the continuing use of these journals as tools for learning.

Dolores LaGuardia explains that, with adult students in college and universities in night classes, she finds that the setting could sometimes be impersonal, and may not allow for the same kind of relationship that is easily developed with day students. Therefore, in order to develop a closer relationship with them, she uses night letters:

In order to make up for this lack of personal contact and to keep up with students' progress, I have begun the practice of "Dear Delores" letters. I ask students to take time to tell me how they're doing...

(LaGuardia, 1994:19)

Basically, what this educator is doing is promoting with her adult students a type of journal writing, for it is something that they do after each class, allowing them to keep in touch with the teacher, to tell her what is happening, how they feel about the class and what has been taught. But they are also gaining practice with expressing themselves in writing, creating opportunities to think about what they are doing and what they ought to be doing, by reflecting in print.

TEACHERS AND JOURNALS

Teachers have devised various ways to make journal writing effective. Nugent and Nugent conducted classes in which students were asked to keep two journals, one of a more personal nature. They discovered that the students were able to synthesize the material much more easily because of the double-entry journal writing (Nugent and Nugent, 1989:258-263).

Teachers now use journals in a variety of classes but Seshachari explains that in recent years there has been a trend towards writing across the curriculum at the college level:

The belief in writing as a means to enhance student learning has recently earned great credibility. Many campuses, such as my own, pride themselves on being "writing" campuses, where students are required or encouraged to write a great deal by the time they graduate.

(Seshachari, 1994:7)

In some colleges and universities, instructors and professors are encouraging their students to keep journals. However, these are journals that are mediated by the instructor, and are intended to encourage the students to think critically about their work.

The purpose of the instructor-mediated journal is threefold: to encourage students to:

- (1) overcome their fear of writing,
- (2) enhance their critical thinking, and
- (3) raise their level of discourse within the discipline, so that they merit higher scores in college-level examinations.

The purpose, in short, is to enhance student learning and performance (Seshachari, 1994:7).

However, in this writing experiment, students were also encouraged to write with computers. They were told that they were to write their ideas straight on the keyboard, and not first in handwriting to be then typed on the computer. But apart from developing critical thinking towards the work done in class, this author recognizes that there is something very personal about journals. She explains:

Writing I say, is the time when we are really confronting ourselves. We have to look into ourselves, confront ourselves, and make friends with ourselves in order to write honestly. (Seshachari, 1994:8)

This particular experiment involved a great deal of teacher commitment. The students did not have the same freedom with their journals as in other cases. Yet, this type of journal writing did yield results. Students learned about their subject matter, but they also learned to think critically, while at the same time improving their writing skills.

In technical writing, journal writing may assist the process of learning by helping students in organizing their thoughts. Bernadt studied the writings of students at the college level, and discovered that as they kept journals, their writing improved, but their work also became more organized.

Fox and Fox also studied the use of journal writing at university. They noted that pioneer work in writing across the curriculum was done by James Britton

and his colleagues in England. In this study, Britton investigated two thousand pieces of writing from sixty-five secondary schools and concluded that over 84% of the writing was transactional, where the writing served "to instruct, inform, or persuade" (Fox and Fox, 1990:53). What was also noted was that many teachers failed to realize the value in the writing process for their students. The Foxes maintain that in other studies, it was shown that

...expressive writing may be, at any stage, the kind of writing best adapted to exploration and discovery. Writing to learn depends upon an active rather than a passive approach to learning. It requires that a person conceive of both learning and writing as meaning-making processes involving learners in building connections between what they are learning and what is already know.

(Fox and Fox, 1990:53)

Once the students saw the purpose for the writing process, they quickly took part. However, according to the researchers, there were many students who did not understand this meaning-making process, and therefore objected to it. In fact, in several interviews conducted as part of the study of the writing courses at University of Hawaii, many interviewees were concerned about the expressed purpose of these courses. The researchers claimed that in conducting the interviews about the writing classes, these comments were troubling, seeing that the interviewees were students who had taken at least five of these classes:

Students want more explicit statements from the university's faculty and administration about the purposes of the writing course requirement and of individual writing assignments.

(Hilgers et al., 1995:80)

What seems important in the writing process is that good students see the activity as holding meaning and that they want to participate. This finding may indicate why, in this study conducted by Hilgers (1995), some students at first objected to intensive writing programs that were initiated at the university. One student commenting on the introduction of journal writing observed:

At first I thought the purpose of the writing-intensive writing requirement was to 'thin out the herd.' I couldn't write well. I thought they threw this at me to get me out of here. But I finally took one writing class, then two, then as many as I could. Now when I go back home and my old friends who never came to UH see me, they say "What's the matter with you?" I've changed - my writing, my speech - it had a domino effect. My attitude changed. (Quoted in Hilgers, Bayer, Stitt-Bergh, Taniguchi, 1995:59)

The manner in which the journal was used in this class involved the students writing at the start of the class for about five minutes. The subject matter on which they wrote was usually something that they were required to read about. The writing was expected to include something about the facts that were read, as well as their response to the reading. Students were also expected to do five minutes of journal writing in the middle of their 50-minute class.

Commenting on the purpose of writing at this time, Fox and Fox explain: "This opportunity to write gives students a chance to become more actively involved in the learning process, as listening sometimes becomes mechanical" (Fox and Fox, 1990:54). It would seem that some of these students were concerned about the purpose of the writing exercises. They were not sure that these were intended to promote writing for learning, or for the added benefit of improvement in writing skills. In order for learning to take place, the students had to see the meaning-making purpose behind the journal writing. In fact, Fox and Fox see journal-writing as holding a unique position, for the journal acts as a diary and a

class notebook. They believe that it offers the student an excellent opportunity for learning:

The journal is somewhere between the two. Like a diary, the journal is written in first person about ideas, feelings and thoughts important to the writer. Like the notebook, the journal may focus on academic concerns the writer wishes to examine. The journal encourages writers to become conscious, through written language, of what is happening to them, both personally and academically. (Fox and Fox, 1990:53)

Journal writing therefore helped to focus the students' attention on the subject matter that was being discussed. More than that, the authors claim journal writing helped the students to go "one step beyond vaguely thinking about responses, but staying short of making formal written assignment which might cause unproductive anxiety over form or style" (Fox and Fox, 1990:54).

These authors demonstrated that beyond learning the material and thinking vaguely about the issues involved, journal writing teaches the writers to be critical. The process of writing that they encouraged in their health education class helped the students to learn the subject matter of the course, and assisted the students in getting to know more about themselves as they revealed their personal feelings about the subject and helped them to hone their writing skills, while supporting critical thinking.

CRITICAL THINKING

It was pointed out earlier that many colleges and universities incorporated writing as part of the curriculum in the various subjects because they saw this as a means of helping students to master content and concepts. However, a beneficial side effect was that it assisted in promoting critical thinking. Reinertsen and Wells discussed the benefits of dialogue journals in which students were expected to write their thoughts and share them with others, helping them to expand their ideas.

Consideration of audience adds a complication: when writers consider a reader as they compose, they must expand skeletal ideas in order to communicate them clearly. Creating authentic structures for exploratory writing is one of the best ways in which teachers can help their students learn.

(Reinertsen and Wells, 1993:182)

In this type of journal writing, the student writes to another student and receives a response from that student. Either of the two students could initiate the topic of discussion, although the topic must fall within the guidelines of the class. Students were put into dyads and encouraged to do team writing. They were expected to think sociologically and at the end of the experiment, the researchers explained that they were pleased with the results. It was clear that journal writing had achieved other benefits as well.

All of the students...receive the opportunity and the encouragement to reflect, to question, to evaluate, to consider multiple perspectives, to become aware of their biases, to deal with uncertainty, and to relate personal experiences to new learning.

(Reinertsen and Wells, 1993:185)

It was shown that the atmosphere in the class was comfortable, and journal writing added to the congeniality of the groups (Reinertsen and Wells, 1993:185). One student demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills when she wrote:

As I've been writing these journals to you, I realise that you are not only an audience for my thoughts and feelings but also a blackboard and mirror. When I write to you, I also write to and for myself. It's a catharsis of sorts. I think that putting things on paper is the easiest, most efficient way to discover and say what you (I) think and feel....I address my questions to you, but often answer them for myself and bring things into better perspective.

(Reimersten and Wells, 1993:185)

In a study conducted by Zacharias (1994), an attempt was made to show the relationship between journal writing and thinking. The author set out to define specific goals. Students were asked to identify the experiences that they had with their journals:

Journals can be used in the classroom to have students write a personal entry that compares aspects of their learning with their own experiences.

(Zacharias, 1994:266)

Besides comparing, journal writing can encourage students to summarize, or to develop the ability to restate the gist of a piece of work; to observe, classify, interpret, and to criticize and look for assumptions. "Journal writing is seen in literature as a tool that encourages critical thought and self-evaluation" (Zacharias, 1994:267).

But more than that, the keeping of a journal could help students with other processes, imagining, collecting and organizing data, hypothesizing, applying

facts and principles in new situations, decision making and coding. In other words, students could look at issues, think about them, assess their own thinking and then make decisions.

Critical reading and thinking were also by-products of the writing process, according to Kletzien and Hushion, who maintain that some students who are at risk generally do not read a great deal and then only required material, with the aim of getting through it as soon as possible. Journal writing that was in response to reading helps the students to give their own impressions about what they have read and helps them to think critically. These authors point out that when students were first asked to respond to their reading, they began by telling what the story was about. The problems that they were encountering stemmed from their lack of experience with thinking critically (Kletzien and Hushion, 1992:447). They explain that the writing of journals could help at-risk students improve reading, writing and thinking skills. Working with high school students, these teachers incorporated a reading and writing workshop, where the reading was self-directed and the writing of journals was encouraged (Kletzien and Hushion, 1992:444).

I feel that journal writing is an activity that is found to spur critical thinking at most ages, even with people who may have experience with this kind of required thinking. Journal writing necessarily calls upon students to say how they feel about what they have read, and this can help them to formulate and express their own ideas, and to be able to respond to other people's writings.

Fulps and Young also explain that it can be used in response to the reading that the students have done, giving the students an opportunity to express their own feelings about the reading. They point out:

Today much student time is spent in preparation for mandated reading and writing tests. Consequently, students rarely get a chance to generate their own meanings as they read and compose their own thoughts as they write.

(Fulps and Young, 1991:109)

Journals are seen as invaluable because this is writing that will not be corrected, or cannot be corrected, because it is simply the reaction of the students to what they read, personal expression which they may choose to share with others. Commenting on the nature of these journals, Fulps and Young point out that "Reading response journals are informal, written communications between two or more people about something one person has read about. These journals can include personal reactions to, questions about and reflections on what has been read." An important concept is the sharing of what is written. As well, at the college level, Newton demonstrates that response journals can help students to understand literary texts. He observes that "The journal is a particularly effective way for students to track their individual meaning-making efforts over a period of time" (Newton, 1991:477). When college level students wrote their journals in the particular freshman class that was being studied, they were really keeping track of their progress, for they responded to a series of questions about the struggles they were encountering in understanding a challenging literary text. This was instrumental in the learning process, because it helped them "...develop and assess their own learning strategies," (Newton, 1991:477).

If students write regularly about why and how they interpret various texts, they can gain invaluable insight about themselves as learners.

These students, in writing their response journals, learned more about themselves and the manner in which they learn. Gaining such insight must prove invaluable as students continue with their studies.

While much has been said about allowing students to respond to their reading from their own perspective and repertoire, there are other writers who believe that students should be guided in their response. Pritchard observes:

Certainly, we teachers must encourage a student's authority as reader of literature, but as informed readers ourselves, we must also help students read to expand their repertoires of response to and interpretation of literature. (Pritchard, 1993:24)

While students must have autonomy in their reading, very often they do not understand what they have read and then it cannot be appropriate to leave them in ignorance. In order to anticipate this, some teachers give their students a framework in which to work. Pritchard recommends the use of reading prompts which help students to think along certain lines. He asks: "How can we respect student responses, which are often intrusively naive and even based on misreading, and still value a literary perception of the text?" (Pritchard, 1993:25). Therefore, under these circumstances, it can be argued that the response journal helps the students to make what they have read part of their own experience. These students bring their experiences to the reading, and use their experience and what they have learned from their reading to create their writing.

Livdahl (1992) asks whether students "...construct important meanings from stories that go beyond their own experiences?" Can individuals take their own experience and incorporate it into their reading? According to Livdahl, it can be done. The journal is the means whereby the students make the new knowledge and experience from the reading their own. Pritchard's implication is that students should be helped in the understanding of literary texts, which would also affect the way that they respond to the reading. "Writing leaves an artifact of thinking: a record remains that can be revisited" (Pritchard, 1993:30). Journal writing is transactional and helps the student over time. The transactional perspective asserts that meaning emerges from the negotiation between reader and text, not simply from an interaction, but from a transaction. In this process, readers bring their background of experiences to the literature while the literature itself becomes part of their experience (Pritchard, 1993:30). Livdahl notes: The student's journal entry read: 'What shocks me is the blood, the gore. I knew that war was not a pretty thing, and could have foretold many gruesome deaths, but to read it is to live it, different from just knowing it' (Livdahl, 1993:192).

Journal writing can be seen as the means whereby the students are able to incorporate their new experiences gained through reading into their life experiences and to express these connections. The journal can be an important part of assimilating that combined experience.

Recently a small group of Wiltshire science teachers tried to identify some of these purposes for the journal and came up with the following list:

- They enable pupils to collect ideas and information together before they embark on a continuous piece of writing.
- They can help pupils to "re-discover" the information that they have already taken in.
- They can help pupils to come up with their own questions about what they still need to find out.
- They allow pupils to express their feelings about the work they have been doing with honesty to the teacher.
- They make two kinds of internal conversation possible: a conversation that the writer carries on with herself; and a conversation that the writer can have with the teacher without the rest of the class hearing.
- They can provide a pupil and her teacher with a personal map of the progress she is making. They can be a valuable source of information for any detailed profiling scheme.
- Journal/log writing does not demand a special writing style; the pupil/learner/writer/is free to think onto paper as the words come. For this reason journals often carry a strong sense of the writer's voice in a way that more formal, transactional or product-oriented writing does not.

(Fulwiler, 1987:45)

STRUCTURING JOURNAL WRITING

Moffett and Wagner believe that journal writing is indispensable, especially for silent readers. They point out that:

Students reading silently need a way to register their responses - bring them to awareness - equivalent to uttering responses in collective writing (Moffett and Wagner, 1991:72).

This is in keeping with the earlier observation of Livdahl about students incorporating new experience into their own through journal writing. The manner in which Moffett and Wagner use the journal resource is to have two entries, or as they call it, 'a double-entry journal.' The journal page is divided into two, with the student writing his response on one side:

They may ask the teacher or someone else to write on this blank half what occurs to them about the original entry. This can become a valued and valuable dialogue about reading experience. (Moffett and Wagner, 1991:73)

What is interesting is that these authors see the journal as a tool used by the students for acquiring comments about their responses. Thus, journal writing is seen not only as helping the students to put their ideas on paper, but adding to their experience by having other people respond to their writing.

Journal writing has been seen to give varying degrees of freedom to students to write. While it gives them the means of expressing themselves, journal writing also helps them to take control over their writing and their thinking. Weir points out that at one time as a teacher, "I orchestrated the situation and determined to a great extent what those responses were." However, she has shifted to a mode that allows the students greater control over their writing, moving towards greater involvement of the students with what is taught.

In my effort toward a collaborative classroom, I'm trying to give up control - to place control in the hands of each individual student. I'm trying to give them ownership...And I'm struggling. Not all students want ownership. (Weir, 1991:43)

She observed this as she asked students to write journals, and while some students saw this as an opportunity to write what they wanted, other students wanted to be given a topic about which to write. Then she tried to motivate them to take control of their freedom.

...I tell them to please themselves, to write it the way they would write, to write about what is real to them, to surprise me, but most of all to surprise themselves. (Weir, 1991:43)

But the author points out that she does not really leave the students completely on their own, because she gives them a frame of reference within which to write. Usually the starting point is something they have read and then they respond to it in any way they feel. However, freedom is built into the curriculum, for students actively choose the literature they would like to read and thus, choose indirectly the subject matter they would like to discuss in their writings.

One of the advantages of having student journals is to keep students interested in their work and in school in general. By having them engage in activities that are meaningful and relevant to them, teachers could help students to learn in more meaningful ways. Daisey carried out a study with her college students in which she asked them to keep journals. This writing is important in the learning process, because it affords them an opportunity to describe and explore their own experiences and to voice their opinions, perceptions, and questions to teacher- or student-initiated inquiries (Daisey, 1993:437). She also explained that students find that journal writing gives them the opportunity for personal expression, and this encourages student interest and involvement in learning.

Adam (1992) found that she had to show her students that journal writing was relevant to them before they would undertake writing. At one time, she provided her students with questions for them to answer and writing assignments that they had to complete. Then she decided to let them write whatever they wanted; the students were at a loss. She spoke to them about the kinds of writings that she had done and shared this with the class. She also told them the reason that people wrote in journals, "...to escape their realities...sort through problems and personal conflicts on paper...to explore their thoughts as well as to manage their stresses through writing" (Adam, 1992:30). She

participated by responding to the writing of the students and answering questions that these students might have.

But there are other advantages to having students keep journals. Daisey maintains that "...teachers and students have the opportunity to become better acquainted." Teachers are also encouraged to keep journals so that they could share with the students as well. Daisey exchanged journals with her students: "I write in my journal and share my thoughts with students." Furthermore, Daisey explains that she responded on a weekly basis to what her students had written. Thus, it was not only the students that were writing and sharing with the teacher and other students. The teacher was keeping a journal and sharing as well. As she says, "Suddenly they agreed that journal writing had a purpose." Students write when they have something to say. Finding something to write about will be problematic for some students. If teachers have as their main objective to get their students writing, it means looking for topics that will interest their students, and be relevant to their lives.

Journal writing can also be seen as an important means for having students express their deepest feelings. Many individuals might not feel comfortable talking about certain issues, but they might feel easier writing about them. Some students might even find the writing experience therapeutic, because they are able to write about matters that affect them directly. When they are then able to share these ideas with others, they find out that they are not alone. As Hall points out:

Several individuals in the field of education of the gifted recommend using journal writing for helping students understand the common problems almost universally experienced by the gifted.

(Hall, 1990:2)

Research into gifted children revealed that such children have problems that might not be understood by others. For example, when these children withhold their emotions, other persons may never truly understand them as individuals. Hall also points to two other researchers working together in studying gifted children, Kaffrann and Colangelo (1977), who indicated that gifted children may actually find it easier to communicate through their journal writing. Hall explains that Zaffrann and Colangelo

...suggest that gifted students are usually very skilled in writing and can express their personal social concerns in writing. Whereas it is sometimes difficult to talk about 'personal concerns,' writing offers a more comfortable means of expression.

(Hall, 1990:2)

It was also suggested by these researchers that counsellors can use these personal journals as a means of helping gifted students deal with their problems. Hall discusses some of the measures she has used with gifted students: journal jumpers, film reaction writing and journal analysis. In the case of journal jumpers, she provides students with story starters and they write what comes to mind. Hall notes that "Journal jumpers are used just as we use story starters to help students with ideas to promote self-disclosure and self-analysis" (Hall, 1990:3). Students are also shown films and asked to write about what they have seen. Journal analysis involves giving the students questions about the film and asking them to fill out a questionnaire based on how they feel about issues that are presented in the film that they might have seen.

In this context, journal writing is seen as an essential tool in self-expression. Gifted students in a counselling setting were seen to be greatly helped through this process of journal writing. It was discovered that by writing in their journals, these students revealed in writing what they could not, or would not, verbalize. They were able to share these journals with other students who were like them, and so came to have a better understanding about themselves.

This same approach seemed relevant to minority group members who on a daily basis faced experiences that could be frustrating. As with the gifted students, many people who are unable to speak out against the problems that they face find it therapeutic to write about it. Simons shows writing as a help in expressing feelings of oppression, and uses minorities as an example of people who write for this purpose.

Initially - perhaps this is why so many teenagers in the hesitancies of adolescence have started journals - writing in this private book serves as an outlet, a place to say that which is not ready for communication to others, but at the same time needs to be wrested with and expressed by the individual.

(Simons, 1975:15-16)

Journal writings tend to be very personal, and reflect the issues that are of concern to the writer. Singer studied student journals and notes that these journals concern intimate and critical issues in the lives of the writers. He discusses what a teacher is supposed to do after seeing the crisis that the student is in, yet having to respect the individual's privacy.

The value of learning to ignore audience while writing, then, is the value of learning to cultivate the private dimension: the value of writing to make meaning to oneself, not just to others. This involves learning to free oneself (to some extent, anyway) from the enormous power exerted by society and others: to unhook oneself from external prompts and social stimuli. We've grown accustomed to theorists and writing teachers puritanically stressing the problems of writing: the tendency while writing to neglect the needs of audience because we usually write in solitude. But let's also celebrate this same feature of writing as one of its glories: writing invites solitude, the inward turn of mind, and the dialogue with self. Though writing is deeply social and though we must also practice enhancing the social dimension of writing, writing is also the mode of discourse best suited to helping us develop the reflective and private dimension of our mental lives.

(Elbow and Clarke, 1987:32)

A SUMMARY OF JOURNAL WRITING

My reading has convinced me that journal writing could be beneficial to students, provided that it is used in appropriate ways. It would also be expected that young people, when writing their journals, would deal with topics and issues that are pertinent to them. However, there were some concerns about journal writing: the question of privacy; the matter of control; how teachers can persuade their students to write in their journals without forcing them to, and the students' right to freedom of expression without being criticized by the teacher. While students are encouraged to write, and since writing of this nature draws on the personal, there is the question of the ethics of sharing what others have written for a journal. It was mentioned previously that although students knew that they were writing for class, they could not help including their personal beliefs and ideas. Students should not be required to submit their complete journals for assessment. There are times when individuals write for themselves only, because they are not yet ready to share what they have written. To respect the journal writer must therefore be a major concern. I read the journals

because I was given them freely, but then I only received certain journals or portions of journals.

Rainer points out that many people keep diaries because they want a place where they could write their deepest thoughts, and where these could be private. "There is no rule that a diary has to be kept secret, though there are many good reasons for wanting to keep it private" (Rainer, 1978:45). People keep diaries for many reasons, and some use them to give them 'the freedom to write sloppily, ungrammatically, profanely, somewhere in (their) life, or... (they) may want the freedom to explore...(their) lesser selves without making explanations to others" (Rainer, 1978:45).

Writing could be likened to a diary, and involves cathartic writing. Such writing needs to be done immediately. Rainer explains why:

The use of the diary for catharsis, or emotional release, may be so obvious that it seems not to warrant mention. Yet it is surprising how many people fail to take advantage of the opportunity offered for emotional purgation because they think of the diary as a product rather than a process.

(Rainer, 1978:53)

The writing of emotional material could also be accommodated in a journal which resembles a diary in this important respect. It is for this reason that journals should not be assumed to contain writing that is available to every one. Thus, for many individuals, journal writing is very personal writing that is thought of as being private. Respect should be given to the individual's writing, and should only be shared when one is invited to do so that depends on what the student is writing about, and whether he/she chooses to share. Therefore, students should not be forced to share their writing. Again, if students know that they would have to share their journals, they might not choose to write.

Another important factor is that of control. From reading many of the articles on journal writing, one is presented with a wide range of discussions on how journal writing is conducted. In some cases, journal writing is in response to a particular reading or set of materials, and entails answering specific questions or having a definite framework within which to write. In other cases, journal writing entails responding to discussions, ideas, opinions, or even readings as one sees fit. In some of these cases all students are required to respond to a certain work. Still yet, there are journals where students are able to write whatever they want, including responses to certain discussions. At the same time, these students may discover that they are not limited by any framework, giving them the opportunity to use writing for whatever purpose they choose. Therefore, the issue of control in journal writing is not so much an issue of the teacher trying to hold on to control, as an issue of the teacher trying to present a form within which students can exercise their freedom of expression. At times, preparing the structure may interfere with the freedom of expression.

Anderson (1993) notes that many teachers experience difficulty in using journals, and this might stem from the fact that there are so many different goals that are expected. Anderson points out "One way I do this is by having students keep a journal in all of the courses which I teach. I usually assign a weight of 20 - 30% to the journal" (Anderson, 1993:304). He assigns specific things to be read and to be written, but he claims that part of the reason he does not have as much trouble with students is that he does not "lay down definite rules for journal writing at the commencement of each semester" (Anderson, 1993:304). His rationale for doing so is that he wants greater freedom for the student.

Earlier, it was noted that some students did not want control. Weir (1991) explained that some students preferred to be given topics about which they could write. On the other hand, there were students who benefited from being able to write what they wanted.

Livdahl (1993) points out that the problem of control is difficult for the teacher, who must balance structure of the learning process and freedom to learn and express. Speaking about the dilemma that the teachers faced:

We were back to the dilemma that plagues so many of our pedagogical decisions. How can we structure learning tasks and situations so that they don't restrict the students' learning? How can we free students "to order their own learning without abandoning them in the trackless wilderness?

(Livdahl, 1993:193)

I want students to experiment with writing, to experience perhaps for the first time, writing that may be highly personal, relatively unstructured, speculative, uninhibited, tentative, in process in flux.

(Anderson, 1993:305)

However, the journals that his students make up are corrected, and he claims that he makes comments in the margins to encourage and to show where the students have gone wrong. He also evaluates the journal, showing where students merely related what happened and asking them to say how they felt about what happened. Nevertheless, he claims that students benefit because many of them become proficient writers. However, it seems that teachers or instructors correcting writing could be problematic, for some students would not want to be judged on the basis of their statements. The journals that his students are expected to keep deal with specific questions within a specific framework. Adam (1992) explained that she abandoned her method of having students answer specific questions and write in response to a specific framework, resulting in the students expressing themselves to a greater extent than before.

While students might be free to write what they want, and free to share with the class or group, there is also the question of how their response will be treated. Zacharias (1994) notes:

Undertaking journal writing in the classroom is not without its potential pitfalls, say a number of writers. Duke (1986) found it to be a risky enterprise, and she feels one must be prepared to defend students' rights to self-expression.

(Zacharias, 1994:269)

It would seem that in Duke's class, one of her students had criticized the principal of the school in the journal. When the principal read the journal, he put an end to journal writing. The student was therefore limited in expression by being told that certain topics were "off limits" to discussion. What if the very topic that is off limits is exactly what the student needs to write about?

Since I began requiring journals in my political science courses, I have read well over five hundred journals written by freshmen and seniors, by majors and non-majors, by committed students and by students who couldn't care less about political science. My experiences have taught me several lessons: First, for journals to really work as tools to strengthen student writing or student learning, they require a significant commitment from the instructor who chooses to use them. Second, in the absence of this commitment, both the instructor and his or her students will find journals a painful and time-consuming exercise in futility. Third, if the instructor makes the necessary commitment at the front end, he or she will find that journals make a substantial contribution to the educational process, especially to one's own sense of efficacy and to students' sense of accomplishment. And finally, journals can work in any political science class, regardless of the subject matter, as long as the instructor makes the necessary commitment of time and energy.

(Brodsky, 1987:386)

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The methodology used in this paper is that of a reflective narrative, which Richard Courtney states is a bona fide means of carrying out research. He contends that this is one of the styles of educational research which involves a naturalistic/descriptive and normative style, where

...phenomena are observed and described as they exist or operate in a variety of possible ways, usually followed by some element of analysis; qualitative rather than quantitative. (Courtney, 1987:57-58)

To determine the format that this study would take, I did a literature review of the various methodologies that other researchers used, and studied the manner in which they carried out their research. Pritchard, who in applying this methodology looked at the works of other researchers, which she then incorporated into her own work. For example, she noted that after reading a study conducted by James Marshall (1989),

...I began to realize that some of my literature lessons had been based too much on strategies to develop reading comprehension.

(Pritchard, 1993:24)

Therefore, she reported her observations that she had made while teaching her students.

Similarly, when Kathleen Weir (1991) wrote about freedom and responsibility in the classroom, she used her daily teaching as a research laboratory, observing what was going on, and giving her responses.

Zacharias (1994) also noted that her observations about writing came about not through a study set up for that purpose, but rather through observations of what was happening in her class:

This review reports on the observations made by educational practitioners concerning the relationship between the current interest in journal writing and thinking processes. The literature indicates that valuing journal writing as an educational process presupposes a view of education as learner centered and a view of writing as process-oriented. (Zacharias, 1994:265)

The findings of this study were based on observations through actual teaching experience and not through a laboratory modality set up to prove a particular theory.

In the case of Kletzien and Husion (1992), their study was based on a reading workshop that they had implemented. It was an ongoing, observational study of the performance of students in the workshop and their use of journals. Fox and Fox (1990) spoke about research that was set up to study a certain hypothesis by Britton and associates in which over a thousand pieces of writing were sampled and analyzed.

Adam (1992) used her classroom as a natural laboratory over time, noting that she discovered things in the classroom were different from what she was taught to expect. Thus, for her, the best type of experiment is one that is ongoing and based on her regular work. Therefore, in carrying out my research project, I began by working with students selected from my class.

A study of journal writing at the community college level in Technological Studies would be advantageous in that it might reveal whether the processes

that have been developed at the elementary and high school levels could be duplicated at the community college level. Although studies have been done at the university level, I found that they often did not deal with the overall functioning of the students but focused on the academic achievements. I felt that a study of this kind at the community college level would afford me the opportunity to see if there were similarities in improvements that took place with students involved in journal writing at different stages throughout their school lives.

The study employed these three instruments: students' journals, my observations on the students performance and questionnaires, in order to look at the effects of journal writing on the students in terms of content, style, and language skills.

The questionnaire gathered information about how the students felt about writing in general, about the writing we have done in class, what they perceived to have gained from the experience in terms of writing skills and how it has changed their approach to learning. This questionnaire included student evaluations of the writing process and its accomplishments in terms of their learning.

I also felt that a study of this kind would provide me with information as to the efficacy of journal writing in my own classes, and help me to see in what ways I could or should make curriculum changes for the improvement of the next set of students with whom I would teach writing.

For the school year, the students were given different writing assignments to complete and some of these were used in the analysis. These journals of the students written over a period of a term were used to examine the kinds of writing that the students produced. The students themselves were asked to fill out a questionnaire, giving their impressions of the journal writing experience. Since some of the questions were open ended, the students had opportunities for expressing their personal responses.

PILOT STUDY

I began my research with a small pilot study to refine my methodology and to clarify my goals.

The subjects were two students, age 20 and 22, male, Black, who were born in Toronto. The method of obtaining the information was through journal writing. However, the journals were not marked. The students were also interviewed about how they felt and what they thought about their writing.

FINDINGS

The journals reflected concern over the events that were taking place in the community, with respect to the treatment of Blacks. They wrote about police and Blacks, about the injustices they saw being perpetuated in society. They spoke about the harassment of police of friends they had known, and in one case, of the harassment the writer himself had experienced.

The subjects spoke about the discrimination that kept them out of good jobs, or jobs at all, that caused them to be thought of as second-class citizens. They also took a historical stand, for they looked back to the history of Blacks and the oppression they have had to suffer.

They also criticized the media for their biased reporting. They pointed out that whenever a crime is committed by a Black male, it is played up in the news and the suspect identified. When it is a white person, race is not mentioned. One of the subjects pointed to the case of the three young men who had shot a grocery clerk, Barbara Turnbull, in a variety store hold-up. The media were continually speaking about it and made a heroine out of the victim. About the same time, a young Korean man was gunned down and killed by a white man. The Korean man had recently come to Canada, and had a young wife and children. This was reported in such a limited fashion that many people did not hear about it. They saw the Toronto Sun as the medium most responsible for this discriminatory treatment of blacks.

Much of the criticism of the system could be probably attributed to the influence of their parents. These students were born in Canada and never really experienced the kinds of discrimination that their parents had experienced. Yet, both of these young men seemed to know quite a bit about how Caribbean people feel about the situation in Canada.

Both revealed, when interviewed, that although they were born in Canada, they still feel like immigrants. When people see them, they see them as Black and think of them as new immigrants, when, in fact, Canada is their home. They seem to have a problem with identity, brought on by the way they perceive the

rest of society perceiving them. They do not consider themselves Canadians, but think of themselves as belonging to their parents' homeland. Yet, they know that they do not belong there, because things are so different from Canada and what they are used to.

They wrote very personal material as well, about their own lives and how they felt. When I asked about their reading the material to others, they said they would, only if they felt comfortable with those hearing the journals. One articulated that he would not let just anyone read his journal; it had to be someone who could identify with what he was speaking about and someone that he felt very close to. They felt exposed if the wrong people were to hear what they had written.

When I asked how they felt about the journal writing, they indicated that they enjoyed it, that it was really something that they wanted to do and did not have to complete for marks. They thought it helped them as a learning tool, for they were finding it easier to write. One of the students who at first sometimes suffered from writer's block indicated that this was not a problem now; he was able to write quite easily. Part of the reason, he explained, was that he was writing how he felt and he had no problem in dealing with the subject matter.

From my own assessment of the writing, I felt that there were important improvements in their writing styles. Because they were writing more frequently than before, they were practising and their writing was improving. Their ways of expressing themselves were also changing, because they were becoming more adept at the craft of the writer. They appeared to be thinking more clearly, because in putting their ideas down, they had to ensure that they were saying

what they meant. I found that the language was also changing, becoming more complex.

Both students felt that their writing had improved as well. What I was also hearing more frequently was that their improved writing abilities were spilling out into other courses, because they were finding it easier to begin, to edit and to complete their writing assignments in other classes.

I felt that the students were carrying around some difficult personal "baggage". I saw that their writing was significant in two ways: an expression of the way they felt about their situation in society - the discrimination, the unfair treatment, the lack of opportunities that they perceived themselves as having and their belief that the educational system was not providing motivation for them. Primarily because they felt they would not get the jobs they deserved. Their writing expressed events that were happening in their own lives as individuals. I had learned so much about my two students and they had begun to examine their lives through writing. I was now convinced that journal writing could be beneficial to students, provided that it is used in an appropriate way.

STUDENT PROFILES

The students I chose to participate in this study are representative of the students in the college, though not in the same proportion as they are found in the college community. I first describe the students whose journals I included in this study in particular. My research focused on seven students in my community college technology class.

Michelle is 20, white, from Brampton, and very interested in pursuing a career in communications. She is an average student, and works very hard to do outstanding work. Her writing skills are also average, but she demonstrates creativity in her work. She participates eagerly in class.

Patrick is 22, white, and is a self-starter. He has been on his own since 16, after being in foster homes for several years. He is an average student, who missed a great deal of school, but who is eager to catch up. His writing skills have shown great improvement over the term.

Ron is 19, black, and from Mississauga, where he lives with his mother, since his parents were divorced. He was born in the Caribbean. Ron is an average student who is socially popular with everyone, but he could be an excellent student. His writing shows creativity, and he is always eager to participate in class discussions.

Jan is also 19, white, and lives with her parents in Brampton. She has two younger brothers, and is an excellent student. She will in all likelihood go to university.

Bob is 21, white, and lives at home in the Brampton area. He graduated from high school, and has a brother and sisters who are older than him. His parents both work, and he is enrolled in the Technical Program at the College.

John is 22, white, and comes from Thunder Bay. This is his first time in the city, and John seems somewhat shy. He is in his second year of College, a "B" student, and seems to be happy to be away from home and living on his own.

Mary is a twenty-nine year old Native Canadian from the reserve in Brantford. She wants to return to her home and work with the native community. She is a stabilizing presence in the class.

GUIDED JOURNAL WRITING

I conducted guided journal writing classes by giving the students an opportunity to write within six possible title areas: they could write about a personal experience, a literature selection, a film they had seen, react to a current event such as a media story, choose their own topic, or reflect on a personal event in their lives or in their journal writing class. I asked the students to indicate their choices, and then divided the class into groups on that basis. Some students in the class might decide that they wanted to react to a media story and they then would be asked to bring in a written reaction to a story that they had found interesting. The class would be broken down into small groups to facilitate discussion. Students in the groups might decide to read the reactions and then discuss these among themselves. Next, the class would meet as a whole and each group would make a presentation. Sometimes, the students in a small group might decide to choose one article and have each member write a personal reaction. Then they would combine their reactions for presenting to the class. The students were given the freedom to choose how they would like to handle each assignment. All of these different areas allow the students a wide variety of choices, within a school framework.

TEACHING METHOD

Each day that students attended this class, they wrote for fifteen minutes, which could be at any time during the class. As mentioned above, writing might be a response, a reaction, or grow from a discussion. Students were encouraged to choose topics themselves and to decide what they want to write about. While at times I gave some suggestions on topics that have seemed interesting during the discussion, it was the students who decide to write on a particular subject.

Sometimes, as a framework, I provided several copies of the daily newspaper, and the students examined the various issues and concerns, deciding upon topics that were interesting to them. Many students brought in their own articles or media stories. At times, a student might have had a particular experience that he or she thought distressing or uplifting, and they would share this with the class, the event sometimes becoming the springboard from which other students would write about similar experiences or about incidents that inspired the same emotions. Often, as teacher, I shared some of my experiences with the students.

The second part of the classroom methodology involved how I handle the material from the students. I pointed out to the students from the start of the course that some of their journal writing must be handed in, so that I could note their progress and also ensure that they were completing assignments. However, I did impress upon the students that they did not have to share all of their writing with the class, and that any material I received from them would be treated with the strictest confidence.

I have found this to be most successful even if the topic were chosen from current events or literature. The sharing allowed the students the opportunity to listen to how the same event had affected a number of other people and they gained an understanding of the ideas of others and the ability to glean information that in turn might help bolster their point of view. This in turn helped build confidence in their writing and develop ease in putting forth their ideas. Evidence of this comes when, in their journals, they wrote about how the course had made other courses easier to deal with, in terms of understanding different styles of instructors and how it was becoming easier to put their own ideas down on paper.

During the semester I met with my students on a one-to-one basis in every other class (I see my students twice a week - one double period and one single). In these meetings we discussed concerns over such topics as getting started - content, subject matter and support for their writing. I also acted as facilitator during their group discussions and encouraged dialogue and editing among the members of the group.

At two points during the semester, I examined their material by myself in a private meeting with each student. In this encounter, we looked at one or two of their writings and discussed their strengths. I wish to emphasize that it was up to the student to decide on which pieces they shared with me. This built trust that both of us required if the student was to feel comfortable with my examining the journal. It must also be noted that I never took the journals from the student. The journals are their property and I only looked at them with their consent and only while they were with me.

If the subject matter a group had decided upon for a journal entry were to be "the role of special effects in film," I would use the following format: the subject of special effects would be introduced by a combination of lecture and film, the lecture giving a traditional history of special effects, how they have developed from the most basic in films of the 1900's to the science films of the 1950's to the action films of the 1980's and 1990's. This in turn was augmented by showing film clips from the various periods and ending with a film that my students had chosen. Invariably this ends up being one in the Stalone-Schwartzenegeer genre.

The question asked in this journal exercise is, "How have special effects changed the structure of films and your enjoyment of them?" Proceeding from this point, the class discussed the topic. Because the journal entry was based on what they thought and how they were affected, the students could "get a feel" for other possible views and examine a number of ways of looking at the problem.

They were then asked to work on their own for one period (45 minutes) and to have their rough notes with them the next week in class. Upon our next meeting, they were broken up into groups of four, and in these groups they were encouraged to read their material to one another and try to understand the points of view of the other members.

In addition to this, they were asked to combine their ideas into a brief presentation. This was done in a double period class, with the second part being used for presentations.

For example, in response to an assignment to write something that was of personal interest and relating to film, Ron wrote about the portrayal of Blacks in the movies. Ron's concern was that the negative stereotyping of Blacks in movies reinforces the negative image of Blacks in society, which in turn affects the way that Blacks are portrayed in society. He felt that the Black stereotype was considered reality by audiences.

In the case of Mary, many of the things that she wrote about had to do with her Native Indian heritage. Mary wrote about the movie, "Medicine Man" and a piece on "Amish" religion. The other students all wrote about things that were significant to them, or which had impact on them because of the cultural or social group to which they belonged. Female students wrote pieces, "Showing a Little Flesh? Is This Form of Advertising Degrading to Males/Females?" and "Does Sex Sell in Advertising or Is It an Outdated Concept that Should be Changed?"

It is interesting that, after knowing the students and their real concerns, interests and frustrations, I was able to take much more from their writing. In analyzing the work, I saw improvement in content, style, language skills and in the desire to share their cultural/personal variables.

DESIRE TO SHARE

Initially, many of the students demonstrated some reluctance to share their writing with the class, but by the fourth week, I discovered that a few of the students were ready to do so. Some students were willing to be open in their discussions about matters related to them either personally or culturally.

The choice of topics was wide. Some of the journals, collected about three months after the journal writing class began, reveal a wide range of topics. However, on one of the assignments, the students were asked to respond to a movie or to discuss some aspect of films or television that they found significant. Some of the students reviewed a film, for example, "Total Recall," and "Medicine Man." Others chose topics such as "Why People Watch TV." These are all thought-provoking responses to the same assignment.

The study will therefore be analyzed in terms of students' initial reactions, kinds of writing, choices of topics, teacher perception in terms of students' writing skills, their critical thinking abilities, their desires to share, cultural variables, students' conclusions about journal writing, and the teacher's perception of his role in the process of journal writing.

STUDENTS' INITIAL REACTION TO THE STUDY

When I contemplated doing this research, I realized the importance of using samples of the students' writing from their journals. However, I did not tell the students about my intentions because I did not want any biases in their writing.

After I had decided that the students had completed sufficient material that could be used in this study, I discussed the matter with them. I assured them that if I used any of their writings, they would have to give their permission and that the writing would be dealt with anonymously.

Initially, the writing was sporadic, with students not very confident about what they should write. One of the concerns expressed to me was whether they had to write personal stuff. Most of the students seemed somewhat reluctant to agree to write about things that were personal, until I assured them that these journals were their property, that no one had a right to these journals, not even me, the teacher. They were not going to be graded on what they wrote during the first few weeks, and therefore it did not really matter whether they wrote in full sentences or jotted down a few words or impressions. The journal was a personal vehicle, and students could decide whether they wanted to share with others or not. There would be some special writing assignments that I would give because I had to have some way of assessing their writing skills. I realized the dilemma that a teacher faces in trying to encourage students to write, for them to feel completely free in the expression of their ideas and at the same time having to evaluate the students' work.

After the first few meetings, the students began feeling more comfortable with each other. They decided that they would choose which journal events they wanted to share with the class. It is important to remember that the students could write in their journals whenever they wanted, not only in class. The journal was a personal record of their feelings, opinions, frustrations or ideas.

At first some students wrote a paragraph during journal writing time on a subject. I noticed that even in these early stages, students were writing about issues that were important to them. For example, some of the topics dealt with employment, sex, school, and relationships. On some occasions, the students wrote poems, but most of the journal writing at the start ranged from half a page to a full page of reflective narrative. The writing was usually in sentence form,

although a few of the students continued to write brief phrases. After about a month, everyone in the journal writing class was writing in full sentences, about a page in length on the average, on a wide variety of subjects. They usually shared their writing with class members. About three months after the class began, many of these students were no longer writing one page journals, but were writing articles, essays and short stories, dealing with many different topics.

For the journals, I read through three samples of journal writing for each student. The first sample was the very first piece of writing that they did for my course. The other two pieces of writing were chosen from the other journal entries that each student made during the school year.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study the effects of guided journal writing on students in my community college class. Furthermore, by looking critically at their writing over time, I will have evidence of how their journal writing has contributed to their development as writers and their improved literacy skills. A study of their journal writing also demonstrates my own efforts in assisting the students' development, highlighting the areas where I can begin to rethink my own program.

I looked for development in both the style and content of writing of the students at different stages in the writing process. As with the gifted students, many people who are unable to speak out against the problems that they face find it therapeutic to write about them. Simons (1975) shows writing as a help in expressing feelings of oppression, and uses minorities as an example of people who write for this purpose.

Initially - perhaps this is why so many teenagers in the hesitancies of adolescence have started journals - writing in this private book serves as an outlet, a place to say that which is not ready for communication to others, but at the same time needs to be wrested with and expressed by the individual...

(Simons, 1975:15-16)

Journal writings tend to be very personal, and reflect the issues that are of concern to the writer. Singer (1990) studied student journals and notes that these journals concern intimate and critical issues in the lives of the writers. He

discusses what a teacher is supposed to do after seeing the crisis that the student is in, yet having to respect the individual's privacy. Stanley points out that journals can be used to see how individuals perceive themselves and society.

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

From the questionnaires (see Appendix B), I gathered information about how the students felt about writing in general, about the writing done in class, what they perceived to have gained from the experience in terms of both writing skills and other relevant skills, and how the process has changed their approach to learning. This questionnaire included an assessment of the writing process in my class in terms of their learning. I explained to the students that all of their answers were important, and fortunately seven responded.

All of the students indicated that they enjoyed the technology course, and that they considered journal writing valuable. However, they differed with respect to the amount of writing they did:

- 50% of the students indicated that they did a great deal;
- 25% indicated that they did a fair amount;
- 25% did little writing.

All the students stated that their personal writing increased as a result of their taking the course. All the students indicated that they wrote for themselves outside of school. While all of the students said that they wrote because of assigned work, 75% responded that they wrote for personal reasons, and of these seven students, four indicated that over 40% was personal writing, two

students wrote poetry, one student wrote short stories, one student kept a diary, and two students indicated that they wrote whenever they felt like doing so.

All the students responded that the journal writing they did in the course helped them, in learning to write, in spelling, in writing sentences, in expressing themselves, in learning concepts and in clearer thinking.

In responding to Questions 36 - 37, students confirmed the findings that journal writing was beneficial to them, that they learned many new writing techniques and devices from their journal writing. They also indicated that they learned to express themselves orally, for there were open discussions that the students participated in during the course of the term.

Students indicated that they would like to see journal writing become an integral part of the course, because they not only learned the concepts that were taught in the technology course, but they also learned many valuable skills. One of the students suggested that one of the benefits he derived was having people listen to his ideas.

Five of the students identified journal writing as interesting and beneficial, and three as beneficial. Six students said that they liked sharing their journal writing in class and three students said that some of the topics were too personal.

Some of the suggestions that were given for making the journal writing more interesting were: students should write about themselves; students should be able to choose not to do an assignment but do other writing they thought relevant to them at that time; students should choose when they want to write.

Six students felt that the journal writing was necessary, while one was indifferent.

With respect to the improvement of journal writing, students recommended that journal writing should not be part of the evaluative mark, that the class could have been more informal with respect to the writing assignments, that some students did not participate as much as other people, with some students feeling that they were doing more than their share in participation.

Besides enjoying the class, all the students appeared to have benefited from the journal writing, the majority in a number of ways: improvement in writing skills, improvement in learning, style development, increase in critical thinking and creative writing, a better attitude to writing, and the completion of more personal writing.

These findings are in keeping with the conclusions of the literature review. Journal writing was found to be an innovative and important way to improve students' writing and help them value writing as a means of learning.

AN ANALYSIS OF SEVEN STUDENT JOURNALS

Guided journal writing is seen to be beneficial to students for a myriad of reasons: it helps to develop independence in thinking and learning; it enables students to discover more about the subject matter they are studying; it encourages reluctant readers to become more involved in the reading process; and it encourages critical thinking. Journal writing is also identified as broadening points of view by showing that different students have different

interpretations of the same material. It also gives varying degrees of freedom to students to write and to take control over their learning. Teachers are enabled to participate in the process, and are better able to become acquainted with the students, by sharing their own writings with the students. Guided journal writing also encourages students to express their deepest feelings, and to organize their thoughts in meaningful ways. Through journal writing, students are able to feel more comfortable in the classroom, and to have better relations with students and teacher.

John

John is twenty-one, European and comes from Thunder Bay. This is his first time in what he calls "the big city" and he seems somewhat shy, although he engages easily in conversation. He is in his second year of college and seems to be happy to be away from home and living on his own. He is what I call a typical male student at college. He remains with his friends and enjoys life.

His serenity continues to come forward in his writing. He is not a strong academic, but a student he says, "who has to work like hell to keep his grades at a decent level". Being a person who has always written as a pastime, he feels that writing is a tool in the classroom that helps him learn. With exams constantly on the horizon, he must continue to write in other classes by formulating ideas, and writing in full questions that he will direct to instructors on topics with which he is having difficulty. This gives him the confidence that he needs. Rather than just stumbling and muttering out questions to an instructor, he now attempts a well thought out question to ask.

From the content in his material, he reveals that he has remained centred around basic youth concerns: "money", "fun", "cars", and "girls". This was evident when in his first paper he talked about his life in Thunder Bay:

There is not a great deal to do up there in comparison to Toronto, but it is home. Life is wilder up there with Saturday nights being a mixture of drinking, house parties, and throwing up.

The content of his entries followed this shallow response and did not change during the semester. I felt that his involvement with his group of friends was more a sense of story telling...who had the best story. The content was thin but yet it did manage to help John enter writing in his journal, and explore his mood in print.

Style remained a concern for the semester. His material remained of little depth and little interest. His writing over the controversial murders in St. Catherines was ineffective. With prewriting discussions touching a number of areas, his writing showed little growth:

They should take the guy who did this and kill him. Who would do this? This is something that happens other places but not here in Canada. We shouldn't put him in jail, we should kill him and don't bother with a trial.

I found that his writing just mimicked what was being said around the class and that what he was writing was "just keeping up with his friends."

His language and style lacked development, evident when he wrote:

Television is an unknown hidden addiction, for example, have you ever sat down at six o'clock to watch just one program and before you know it, it is nine o'clock? This can happen if you're bored or even if you have something to do. A lot of people don't realize how much television they really watch. With a lot of families, television is one of the only terms of "quality time".

During discussions with him, it was evident that his major concerns were his subjects pertinent to the course. In his mind, I knew that his respect for my subject was limited. Many students, like John, feel that an English subject was not a priority for them and that my subject would add little to their education that would benefit them. John, during our interviews, said he enjoyed the class and writing, but the feeling was that it was fun but not necessary. His writing did improve but not to the point which I had hoped. Most of his success in my class came from his dealings with others and his ability to spark discussions in his group.

MARY

I have found Mary to be the most interesting of subjects because of her background and of my interest in native Canadians. From the Brantford area, she looks forward to going home and working in the native community. Her kindness and generosity and her soft spoken manner made her a pleasure to have in the classroom. At twenty-nine her maturity helped as a stabilizing factor in the classroom and others looked up to her for her life experience.

She seems to use writing as a steppingstone to develop insight into both writing and skills needed in other subjects, such as calculus and physics. Now she is more apt to approach these mathematical subjects with the same methodology as she would her journal work. I find this to be a true example of how one concept can transfer to other areas. When looking at her notebooks for other subjects, one can see the time that has been spent on editing by examining at the number of corrections and margin notes that she is using in her editing process, a process that she never used before. This also goes hand in hand with her approach of asking questions in class.

Her strongest attributes were her verbal skills followed closely by her ability as a writer. During the semester, she offered insight into topics of common concern, adding vitality and variety to the class. One of the topics she wrote about dealt with cruelty to animals and was written during the early part of the semester. Her point of view in her group erased stereotypes the others felt that would exist in a "typical" Native Canadian. The expected response was that "they" would see nothing wrong with hunting. This was cast aside in group discussions when it became evident the Mary had no interest in the hunting of animals. Mary's journal entry showed them that not all natives thought in the same way about hunting. I use this as an example because in later discussions with her class, it became evident how easy it was for others to fall into these "common beliefs." I think that the following passage from her journal shows the pain that can be caused by stereotypical attitudes:

The way people think of hunting and natives always surprises me. It seems that to people, it is natural that all natives should hunt, live off the land and worship many Gods. To these people I say..."you have been watching too many westerns". People do not realize we are filled with as much variety as any other group of people. Would you not think I was insane if I felt that all white people spoke English or that all white people were Christian? Of course you would. But yet time and time again, all natives have to tolerate being lumped together. Try saying all Blacks are criminals and see how long it takes the media to mark you as a racist. But when these comments are made against natives, the criticism is silent.

Mary's content is strong and her tone aggressive in this piece. She finds a topic that is both personal to her and even more important, eye-opening to her audience. It is rare that I have seen a student writer come across with such integrity in their writing. Her use of subject, timing and flow of language makes her writing effective and dramatic. Her content acted as a catalyst for others as well, and launched them on rethinking their personal feelings towards native Canadians and their treatment. This material also encouraged follow-up discussion, both inside and outside the classroom, on various native groups in other countries and their treatment around the world. Mary helped me by her being the facilitator a number of times, as she argued various points, in not only her writings, but from the writings of others.

During the semester her writing style developed as she started to feel more "comfortable," as she put it, with her writing. In a response on hunger, she stated that:

In order to completely understand the problem of hunger, people must distinguish the difference between famine and hunger. Famine is an acute lack of food that is sudden, local, in specific geographical areas and sporadic. People die from starvation brought on by droughts, floods, and any kind of natural disasters. Famine can be solved by emergency food and relief. Whereas hunger is ongoing, global, and usually goes unnoticed. The people are not starving, but it erodes body strength, shortens life, and stunts growth due to lack of proteins and of vitamins.

Mary has developed a transition in her writing that comes from writing, editing, peer editing, and comments from her instructor. When asked if this was a first draft she smiled and said "try fourth". She knew what she wanted to say but knew she would have to rewrite it and rely on the strength of others to help her get it "just right" as she said. She has started to see that some sentences are relevant, some are not; some add to the story and some detract. By being direct and to the point, her material is no longer surrounded with terms that carry no meaning, evident in earlier work. Along with this, she has avoided the short choppy sentences that were prevalent. Her style has developed a pleasant rhythm that puts the reader at ease.

When one looks at her present work, it is obvious that her use and variety of language add greatly to her content and style. This I feel comes through strongly when I look at a piece she did towards the end of the semester. She had a strong interest in religions and chose an interesting topic to put forth

some of her concerns. Her language skills in this are evident in this journal entry on the Amish in North America:

These people refuse to use electricity in their homes, own automobiles, radios, TV's and do not enjoy what we would call typical socialization, which could range from the use of makeup to dancing and going to the movies. Many are resentful of the Amish and their life style. Others claim the Amish receive favourable treatment by authorities, as they were reluctant to fight in wars throughout history. This has resulted in hatred aimed at them by families that lost loved ones.

Mary continues to express herself with a firm understanding of the use of language. She finds alternatives for dull phrases; her understanding of the passive voice gives strength to her writing and her avoidance of long paragraphs helps the reader move along at a comfortable pace. Her transitions from sentence to sentence are smooth and flow with the touch of the confident writer.

Mary provides an excellent example of how an individual can develop a freedom with their writing that surprises both the writer and the instructor.

PATRICK

I found Patrick to be an interesting man. He is one of those people who always amazes others with his stories. Since leaving school at such an early age, he has had what he calls "a series of crap jobs." Patrick is one of those people who has a story for every occasion. From discussions with him, it is obvious that he talks easily and exudes confidence in himself. But when meeting with him in private, it is also obvious that he wants a great deal out of life and knows that the first step to get this is through going back to school.

How he interacts with students on a higher plane is evident with his group involvement. He is the first to generate new possible paths to go down, as he endeavors to explore different avenues for his writing. His shyness had disappeared and an aggressive style has now become part of his writing. The material is taking on a "matter of fact attitude" that conveys confidence. His writing now acts to clarify his thoughts and is carrying over into his personal life, and his ability to make a point in discussions with friends and family, an area he always felt was lacking in his character.

In interviews with him, his concern over his journal came out many times. He was apt to discuss different styles and was assertive in asking for severe editing of his work. I find that, without these interviews with students, the journal is only a partial tool. To be effective, one must take the information that is written and follow it up with interviews with the students wherever possible, part of the scheduling of any class that involves journal writing. If it were not for these meetings, I would never have found out about Patrick's reason for his drive for

success, his personal wants, and his feeling about the strength of the family. This is partly evident when he talks about such things in his journal:

The only real passion I have in my life is to be able to deliver to others what was not offered to me. That is the love of a mother and the warmth and security of a father and a home. To be able to sit at a family table and talk with ones that care and love you and knowing that the love is not measured or counted but given freely.

Language skills for Patrick continued to grow throughout the semester. In a piece he wrote about a film he enjoyed called "All About a Guy Named Jerry," he gets his message across clearly when he states:

Jerry's outfit consists of an old t-shirt that is three sizes too small. His stomach drops over his only pair of jeans. They're ripped from being in bar fights and he can't afford another pair. Jerry's attitude is piled with different causes of behaviour, which all go together, just as a crazy person would behave.

Of all my students, I would have to say that Patrick has proceeded the furthest. His point of view is interesting and direct, leaving little for the reader to decipher. His content continued to fascinate. In one piece he decided to write on the balance of journalism:

It was in a land of opportunity and of many dreams, that we remember the scene on the street corner with the little boy shouting, "EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!" That boy symbolized the truth, trust and reliance of the newspaper he sold. Is that image still here today or has it swayed with the changing attitudes and mores of a society that today believes it is much more sophisticated?

Patrick's content shows the ability to grasp ideas quickly without becoming tied up in material that is superfluous. His understanding of the use of examples forces the reader to question the ideas and to be a part of his writing. It is an interesting touch and shows maturity in style. In groups, Patrick gleaned the most from his peers. He was the one who always questioned others and used their ideas and criticisms of his work to the fullest. When asked about this, he said that being a high school "drop out," he always felt it would be better to be "low key," but now he felt that he had only kept himself "under a bushel." He is a student, he says, who was restricted by limitations, lack of a high school diploma and a number of "dead-end" jobs. He felt that he had questions that he had always wanted to ask but had always felt uncomfortable about asking them because he thought these questions would make him look inferior.

In all aspects of this student's communication skills, whether it was in the written or presentation mode, I saw growth, evidenced by Patrick's submission of the following piece on how films have changed because of or due to special effects in technology in the 1990's.

Film through our senses causes a metamorphosis that takes us through the birth and death of the characters, as we not only experience the drama that is portrayed for us through the use of sound, special effects, and visual acrobatics, but it also envelops us in fantasy as we become part of the drama, enraptured both emotionally and physically.

His language skills continued to improve: his knowledge of structure acts to give strength and depth to the articles being written. What comes to the forefront on interviews with Patrick is his confidence that has grown throughout his time at the college. Patrick feels that his writing has helped take him beyond the walls of the school. He, like others, has told me that writing has assisted him in other areas as well, including his relationship with his girlfriend. "I feel better about myself and I feel that I can now get my ideas and even feelings across." This is an underlying point that continues to surface, the feeling of confidence constantly comes to the top of the list when students talk about journals.

Content, style and language must not be held within the captive walls of education. As Patrick's discussions with me pointed out, writing in the form of a guided journal continues to develop these writers holistically.

MICHELLE

Michelle is a student who gives the impression of being alive and "ready to attack the world for all it is worth." She is an engaging person when she is working in a group.

Writing has helped her develop an observation skill that she feels she did not have before. Now she says that she looks at things with an inner eye, her words, to see the inner meaning and purpose of the subject or topic on which she is writing. In this way in some of her classes she can look at things or tools of the trade and get a feeling of their purpose, how they will be used and their limitations. Her writing has a touch of honesty and it also generates questions she previously did not conceive of, which in turn have given her writing an inner depth. Her warmth and concern continue to come out in both her actions and writings. Her concern for people comes out in her writing. Writing she says has given her a way in which to develop insight and the ability to deal with the unknown.

Her first article, "Computers Taking Over Jobs and Lives", was well expressed. The content came alive, and it appeared that she had done the research to give her piece some substance. When reading this article, it was obvious that she was communicating the fear that all young people at this point in their lives have, the fear of their future: is there a job for them?

Developing content and finding an appropriate style became evident in her work when she seemed to develop from her basic understanding of putting her ideas down to using a more dramatic format. This shone through in her piece on the discrimination she faces as a single, white female. Her points are becoming more thoughtful and personal:

I seem to run into it at every corner I turn. But I guess if you ask any woman how many times they got a job or lost the opportunity to get a job because of their looks...you would be extremely surprised how many would say, they too have been a victim.

Her thoughts seem to waiver but then one considers this is a journal and not a formal essay, the style becomes secondary to the content. Tenses were right, and sentence structure was simple. The subject matter chosen was discrimination, and demonstrated some critical thinking and introspection.

Asked to look into their own lives, students come forward with meaningful and moving examples of how life is touching them. Michelle's writing is a strong example of this. I must remember that this study is not just simply a study that says "How have students improved," but that it is a look at guided journal writing. Keeping that in mind, I see Michelle's writing improving on a constant basis with encouragement, discussion and gentle prodding by both her fellow students and me. Her insight and depth is evident in her writing when she says,

My God, it wasn't till recently that "forces" allowed women to serve with men. Especially on destroyers and on the battle field. My better half is an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard and he tells me that there is not one woman on his base. In my understanding, I thought women could handle pressure better than men.

Writing gives this reader insight that is drawn from talking, reading, discussing and arguing points. This piece of writing opens up possibilities. Content, style and usage continued to develop as the semester progressed. Michelle grew to

become a leading participant in class discussions and I could tell that various group discussions helped her think about new points and issues as sources for writing.

On the topic of advertising, students were asked to respond to the following question. "Is certain advertising degrading to males and females?" Students were shown some examples that I thought they would find sexist and were asked to come up with their own examples and explore their own points of view. Michelle provided strong examples and her writing substantiated her views. The content was strong, effective and moving. Her style is developing as she takes a different angle in her writing:

How's this for advertising? I'm flipping through the sports pages and I see an ad. It says, "THE BIG ONES ARE BACK." I think about the Maple Leafs, maybe the Dallas Cowboys. But no, they are talking about "Big Hooters." I don't think most women want to see this kind of advertising.

I found that this student's style continued to develop during the semester. She began to express herself in different ways. Her understanding of her own writing improved and that was evident in our meetings. She also said that writing in a journal had given her confidence in her other classes.

CAROLINE

Caroline is twenty-five, white, married, mother of two children. She is a self-starter, and one of the two major participants in class discussions. Caroline is an example of the type of student that I am finding more often in my classes, a married student returning to school. She completed high school and married at twenty. After spending time at home with her children, she decided to return to school. Her first love, she said, has always been animals and she hopes to work in this field in some capacity.

The maturity of this woman has a calming affect on other students in her group. I see this warmth come through in her actions and the time she gives of herself to others. This is evident repeatedly when I talked to others of her group. The image they gave of her was one of strength and that of a listener. As with Ron, she talks about writing being a tool that can be an asset in the learning process. This came to mind when she talked of journal writing being an excellent way to write and digest material she had written for other classes. In her eyes, it adds clarity to the issues raised during the day. She is passing on this skill to her children.

In the seven years that I have been teaching at this College, it was rare to find older married people in class. Now I am finding that out of every twenty students, there is at least one married student and two with children. It is a joy to have some older students in my class as they give a maturity and knowledge that permeates the class, a feeling you do not have when the students are all fresh out of high school. Her content, like Michelle's, was strong and dynamic. Her style had the touch of maturity when compared to most nineteen year olds

that I have taught: it is plain and conservative: proves it, gives examples and then concludes:

Throughout the media world, many companies make millions of dollars due to their advertising strategies. They place their commercials during prime time, when most of the TV viewing population is tuned in. They use big name celebrities, catchy music and the biggest eye catcher, sex.

Through her journal, Caroline has developed her ability to analyse and dissect material and describe how it affects her. While her language skills are fair, her dealings with content continues to grow. Her thoughtfulness and consideration of others comes through in her writing. Her style is becoming more refined, her writing skills are continuing to improve. Her subject matter remains interesting, and she understands the need to look at it with a critical eye and from the standpoint of others.

When I met with her to discuss her journal, she talked about her two children, the obvious passion of her life and of her need to feel worthwhile enough to help raise them. In her journal and in our discussions she talked as a mature mother and not just as a student. She agreed that the major concern she has in her writing is the time factor. With children, a house and a husband she says, "there is little enough time for school work, never mind the idea of finding time to write in her journal."

This resulted in my making a major change in my class. I decided to find time in class that would allow for my students to have more time to work on their journals. I am doubling the time allotted to journal writing, another example of how the strength of a student can come to the surface not solely by their filling out an evaluation form at the end of the semester. This student's journal will have an affect on how classes are scheduled in the future.

In going over her journal entries, she pointed out her worries over grammar skills and we discussed ways of dealing with these concerns. In her journal, she had stated that "...a lack of interest on her part and the ease in which she moved through the educational system was to blame." This is an example of how students start to open up to one another and their instructor in guided journal writing. If it were not for reading her material, meeting with her, discussing the projects and the class in general, this woman would be just a number, just a statistic, sitting in my class. This became obvious in a piece of her writing that gave me a look at what she thinks as a married woman and the invader of her children's world, the television.

There is a saying in the media world that violence sells, but then the media separates violence into two categories, violence and comedic violence. Is there a difference between the two? She reveals herself to be a mother concerned for her children as the world of television continues to move in closer and closer.

BOB

Bob is twenty-one and has worked with his father in the construction business for three years since high school. He had decided to enter college with the dream of becoming an architect technician. He struck me as a strong, determined person with strict goals, a quiet person in his group, the sort of person capable of taking criticism from faculty and students.

His ability to enjoy the development that comes from his writing is something that he always marvels at. Of all my students, he has been the most surprised at how his writing has come to life and how it has helped him in his other subject areas. In most labs, students experiment, observe and then conclude. He has found through the year that his improved writing skills have made it easier to do all three. By understanding how writing works in a mechanical sense, he is now better able to question his own writing. In this way his observation notes are becoming clear to him and more understandable to his lab partner. These notes that are quickly jotted down in the lab now take on an entire new meaning.

He constantly was concerned about the actions of his group, what they had to offer and how he could take their information and make it appear in one voice. This was the only group, out of six, that had the ability to take the writing of a number of people and develop that into a piece of work that did not have the feeling of a group report. They worked on a security problem within the college, considering the hazards in the college around personal security.

Bob's ideas grew during the semester as he tackled one project after another. He began to use illustrations to communicate his concepts to his audience. He wrote about rebuilding an area of interest:

Many students here at the college commute to and from by means of a bicycle. Currently, many students who choose to travel to school by bicycle are forced to lock it up wherever there is a post, a signpost or handrail. My proposal is to build a covered structure in a safe and convenient place with high visibility and capable of housing 35 - 40 bicycles.

He added sketches to support his piece, showing a construct that will serve him well as he enters a profession that will insist on strong reports that do not waste time and get to the point. He has the talent to augment his written word with sketches of his thoughts that act as a second push in stressing his concepts. This, through peer pressure, has been developed during the semester. His first draft on this project did not include sketches, but while talking with his group, it became evident that they were not certain what Bob was getting at with his over-anxious concerns about bike security. When this was brought to his attention, he solved the problems with diagrams.

His style also demonstrates a firm understanding of the shape of the selection: introduction, body and conclusion:

The purpose of the project is to renovate the existing office and warehouse space approximately 2,500 square feet, in order to open a computer-simulated golf business. Renovations are to follow a predetermined rigid time frame in order to have the business in operation by November 1, 1996.

This writing may be simple, and straight forward, but it serves him well for the profession he has chosen. It was my concern that students not be limited to writing on topics determined by the instructor. In this case, I let Bob determine his own topics, and he chose to write about his concern - architecture.

His language skills were developed by group work more than with the interactions that he and I held as instructor/student. He was criticized by his peers and they urged him to develop a form and style that would be functional rather than artful. His skill as a functional writer came through in a directional piece that he chose to write in reference to the construction of a simple deck:

Installing rim joists numbers 22 and 33 follow. Rim joist number 11 is cut to 30 on one end and at 45 degrees on one end. It is then nailed to joists number 9 and 10 and to the double 2x10 joists. Next we install joist number 12 letting both ends 'run long.' Then trim the ends flush with the outside face of rim joists number 8 and 11.

He continued to display the essentials of organization and he showed his ability as he took his work and revised it into an effective product. In fact, it was possible to judge his writing by giving it to his peers and then discussing his

directions with his group members. It was evident by their responses to his directional writing that he was getting his message across to his fellow students.

RON

As a resident of Brampton, Ron says that he spends most of his time in town and seldom ventures to Toronto. I found his writing to be the strongest of all of my students. By strong, I mean powerful, no quarter given and no quarter asked.

Writing to him now means to find a clarity that is accepted by his instructors. In the past he was continually questioned as to: what does this mean--how does lab activity interact with lab activity--and what is the result of this experiment. His journal now gives him an idea of what people are looking for in his writing and the ability to deliver the reports that are so essential to his completion of college. He now sees the relations among English writing, producing value lab reports and the importance of journal writing. He is a fine example of a student who realizes the vast extent and impact of writing skills through the use of the guided journal.

For many students, Ron is in the enviable position of not having to work to attend school. His family is supportive and pays for his education. He gives the impression of someone who knows he is being helped and shows a great deal of respect for his parents.

His content covered a variety of topics, and one of his strongest pieces was a response to a film called "Boys in the Hood". He picked this film to write about because of its depiction of strong Black youth, an all Black film including the

writer, director and actors. Ron demonstrated his knowledge of present day situations in any major city of North American and the conflicts focused on black youth:

The intrigue of the movie is not just that it hits home to black youth, but that the reality of the situation is transferable to Toronto and Brampton. The negative mentality of white police and white bystanders is laughable and not taken seriously. This film has done what most films refused to do and that is, reflect Black culture for what it is, no more than White culture and no less than White culture.

In his writing, I found Ron's maturity could throw up challenges that were not common in other writings by my students. His ability to take the simplest issue, in this case, writing a piece on a film of interest to him, made me take notice of this young man's concerns.

Ron's style continued to develop during the semester, as he delved into other topics of interest to him. He developed a hard hitting, factual "newspaper style" of writing that "jumped up and hit you between the eyes". I always felt from our interviews and from reading his journal that his writing would be of benefit no matter what field of technology he were to enter.

We have all been affected at some point in our lives, by the guns, knives and violence that has corrupted our society. The newspapers have clearly outlined the innocent people that are dying on our streets and in our stores. Discovering these faces on the cover of a newspaper brings me to feel anger, sorrow and empathy for the family and friends.

From his writing it is possible to see his command of language as he takes simple events and phrases and forces the reader to think, not only of the writing, but of the individuals that are being written about. During the semester his material continued to improve with its strong images.

In the past five years the introduction of Audio/Video Stereo receivers has given consumers a choice in how they want to spend their entertainment dollar. The AV receiver now allows you to listen to music coupled with a V.C.R. that also lets you view movies with superb sound.

Ron is a leader. This was evident in his group work where he often made others reconsider issues that they obviously had not talked about before. In these peer sessions, there was always a high level of excitement and quite often I had to ask the group to quiet down as they became heavily involved in their topics. Through the interviews Ron stated that the strongest point of the journal writing class was the discussion in the group. He felt that this is where he fine-tuned his point of view and was able to look at various sides of arguments as they were presented. In our interviews, he told me that the group discussions quite often ended up with his putting a lot of questions in front of his

white associates that they had not considered before. These, he said, covered the gauntlet from racial questions that were based on myth to religious questions that he found to be quite ignorant and naive. Ron continued to be a leader in my class. When I talk to students that were in his peer group, they tell me that he has taken his assertive attitude to other classes and is making a positive impression with other instructors, backing it up with quality writing and higher grades.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

As well as analyzing the journals, I also completed an analysis of my perceptions of these students. Having taught the class for the term and having come to know and somewhat understand the students, I learned new and interesting facts about them from their writing. When I received a submission, even without seeing a name, I knew the young author. The students demonstrated that much of the writing they had done, even when assigned, contained personal content. The particular editorial slant of the writing, the major content of the paper, the specific point of view, demonstrated the particular concerns of each student writer. After working with them, listening to them share their personal journals, as well as assessing the assignments they had submitted, I developed certain perceptions about the students in terms of their writing skills, their critical thinking, their desire to share, the place of cultural variables, and the success that each of the students had realized.

I discovered when they began that some of the students had developed their writing skills more than others. While some could not differentiate between a sentence, phrase or a clause, other students were writing complex paragraphs. Even though the first few assignments were not marked, students tried to improve their writing. After the first few sessions in which some students presented their work to the class, I believe that the members of the class were motivated towards giving a great deal of effort to their writing.

I realized half way through the term that the students were all showing improvement in their writing skills. Whereas students were at one time writing only shorter pieces, they had begun to write two pages and some longer. It was clear that students were interested in developing their writing skills and that the more they wrote, the better honed were these skills. It became clear that these students had developed very different approaches to writing than they had held earlier, as evident by questions such as, "How do you write an essay?", or "Where do you start researching a topic?"

By the time we were two-thirds through the course, I was aware that students were using the five-paragraph format as a basic form in writing their journals. I feel confident that the journal writing conducted by these students, including work initiated by them, as well as teacher-initiated writing, was to have a significant impact upon the writing skills of these young people.

The journal writing also increased the students' repertoire of writing forms. Most of the students had produced different genres of writing and felt comfortable writing in different styles. Only one of these students was interested in writing

poetry. For all the students, prose writing formed the core of their journal writing.

Critical thinking was another factor that I observed among the students. Whereas at one time the students were more willing to accommodate rather than challenge positions and ideas, by the middle of the course, students demonstrated that they were aware that one did not always have to agree with someone else on a subject. There were lively debates during the class time, and the writing that was submitted for assessment as well as the material that I was allowed to read, demonstrated the willingness on the part of the students to hold their own ideas and to make these known.

I found the approach that students took also raised new ideas. For example, from the article on "Society and Violence," the writers demonstrated outrage at the widespread violence that was taking place in society, and made their points very strongly. One student succeeded well in the first paragraph capturing the attention of the reader: "The worst part is that all of these situations can be solved." The article demonstrated critical thinking, for the writer had asked the readers to think their way through with him. After presenting the situation of crime and violence in the society, and having mentioned that much of this is the result of youth, the writer sets about illustrating the factors that might be responsible for youth carrying out criminal acts.

One cause of youth violence is the fact that kids are not being looked after properly at home. There is no structure or moral support from parents and this lack of attention creates angry, resentful, neglected young people. These students are being

overlooked and they come to school scared, frustrated or seriously depressed. The violence and abuse that is experienced and witnessed at home directed at the youths and even the parents is reflected and reenacted in the actions of these youths.

The student writer was willing to examine many different possible causes of the problem, and to assess the factors underlying the personality that becomes violent and criminal. This writer goes on to say that "Some youths have psychological problems or emotional conflicts which can create a fascination with weapons, pornography, violence and rebellion." This journal entry seemed to cover a wide range of topics as the student attempted to show that violence and criminality were not the prerogatives of the young. "Immigration-refugee laws were imposed by the Liberals but never tightened by the Tory government during its nine years in power. Violent crime has jumped more than 6% in Metro Toronto last year and no wonder an increasing number of criminals have been attracted to Canada by our loose immigration-refugee operations." The writer was not afraid to take a particular stand which would lead to more discussion.

This is a major improvement in critical thinking, considering that the student who wrote this article was one who did not participate much in discussion. Yet the writing demonstrates that this student was able to think critically, to identify a major issue and then to break it down into its smaller components. Many students demonstrated that they had developed their critical thinking faculties, and by the latter part of the course they were all able to write pieces that stimulated or provoked thought.

Another article that I thought demonstrated the improvement in the critical aspects of a student writer is seen in the article entitled, "Why People Watch TV?" This student writer put forward different possible causes: people watch television "...just for something to do when they don't feel like doing anything else. People will watch television to get out of doing homework or they just feel lazy. When most people think of addiction, the first things that usually come to their minds are smoking, alcohol and drugs. Television is an unknown hidden addiction..." The idea of linking television viewing with an addiction raises a very interesting case.

CONCLUSIONS

At first I noticed a reluctance on the part of students to share their work, but as they became more acquainted with each other, they began to trust each other with their journals. One student would read what he/she had written, other students would comment, and before long, they were reading to each other. One of the obvious reasons for this was that the students were not judgmental towards each other, and they felt that they were in a safe place where they could say what they wanted without being criticized unfairly.

Near the end of the course, students were discussing highly personal matters in the class framework, and the students had obviously developed a bond of trust among themselves that allowed them to share their work. I realized that the students had also developed trust in me, in allowing me to be part of some of their journal writings. Since students wrote very personal matters in their journals, I came to understand each one of them much better. Many of the issues that were discussed in class began with someone else's experience.

As noted earlier, there were two students from minority groups in our class, and these students added a cultural dimension to the discussions and to the journal entries that were shared. The female students were also conscious of matters related to women and how they were perceived in society.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I chose to do journal writing with my class, because of the potential benefits that could be derived. I felt that, by introducing journal writing, I would offer some variety in my course that would enable the students to expand their thinking on different subjects related to the course. I also felt that by introducing journal writing in my class, I would have the opportunity to interact more closely with the students. Not only could I gain a closer relationship with them, but I would also come to better understand them. As a teacher, this is advantageous because it gives me information that would help me to provide the students with a process that would make the course more effective in helping them achieve their goals. Since I anticipated that there would be students who might not be as enthusiastic about studying as others, I believed that the introduction of writing could act as a means of getting these students more interested in their work.

While part of my goal in doing this study was to see how guided journal writing fares at the college level in light of the studies that were done at other levels, I also wanted to examine my performance in teaching the class and how this could be improved. By seeing what the students were accomplishing, where they were not achieving, I would be able to see where I could put more emphasis and bring about more improvement. This study also helped me to assess at the start of the class what the needs of the students are and how best I could address these, using guided journal writing.

At the same time, I hoped to develop students who were more independent in their studies. As was mentioned earlier, guided journal writing puts responsibility on the students for deciding on the activities in which they would engage. It also means that students would have to take the initiative for some of their studies.

I also saw journal writing as a means of changing my way of thinking. Rather than lecture and provide the students with material which they were expected to learn and then give back to me on an examination, I felt that journal writing would create more critical thinkers, thus improving the way that I teach and the way that the students learn. Since teaching must be seen as involving continuous learning, the use of guided journal writing allowed me the opportunity to expand my learning as well.

I hoped that my students would benefit considerably from the process, that they would use journal writing as a problem solving tool, that they would learn that by writing things down, by expressing the way they feel about things, that they would be better able to see the whole picture and therefore make more informed decisions.

Using guided journal writing in teaching has afforded me the opportunity to see the kinds of improvement that took place in students involved in guided journal writing at different stages of their school lives, helping me to interpret the work of the students and giving me the chance to see in what ways I could or should make changes for the greater improvement of the next set of students with whom I decide to do guided journal writing.

In looking at curriculum studies, one can see how the use of journals in the classroom could improve the education of the student, in keeping with the demands of the new curriculum. Students may be required to keep journals in different subject areas. This helps them not only to learn to write, but also improves their understanding of the subject matter. Journals are also seen as

important in the development of self-concept, in self-esteem, as well as in developing greater sensitivity to the learning process. Journal writing helps students to take control of their learning and enables them to develop the independence to facilitate their own acquisition of knowledge in a way that is meaningful to them.

From the successful studies that have been reported with respect to the use of journal writing at most levels, I wanted to discover first hand whether journal writing could have similar effects on community college students. I wanted to see if these students would develop critical thinking skills, whether they would use the opportunity to express their thoughts about what they had read, whether they would see journal writing as a means of motivating their own need for writing. I also wanted to see the extent to which the students' personal circumstances, their race and sex, among other factors, had impact upon the way they felt about these experiences and circumstances.

Education is about stimulating and encouraging students to express themselves as fully as possible through means available and to reflect upon those responses. The use of journal writing in the various subject areas makes a great deal of sense: students not only learn to write, but they also learn about the subject matter. They develop much better analytic skills, clarifying their thought processes, helping them to understand the task at hand, identifying and getting feedback for the problems, aiding themselves in considering difficult personal problems. The incorporation of journal writing across the curriculum could help greatly in presenting the opportunity for students to participate more in the learning process.

I believe that the outcome of this study may help in motivating similar research using larger samples and that the findings may lead to more colleges taking greater interest in this avenue for effecting the lives of their students. While academic learning is very important at the college and university levels, a teacher or instructor must be concerned about everything that has impact upon the student.

Another factor that has surfaced in analyzing journal writing is that my students continue to demonstrate a desire to learn and to improve their writing. This practice of journal writing has become more relevant to the students, for they see its practical application.

College studies show that the level of education is higher in this area than for the provincial average. This in turn is reflected in this region having a higher percentage of university and post-graduate students. When I look at my students, I see a culturally diverse classroom population which adds to the vitality of the group and often acts as a stimulus for writing and discussion.

I believe that journal writing is an important process, verified by the wide application of this genre in the classroom setting. However, the position that is presented in this thesis is that journal writing should be introduced, but should not be made a burdensome part of the course. Students should be helped to enjoy writing in their journals, and this would encourage them even further to continue to engage in act of writing. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to express their feelings and record their reactions freely. While teacher response is essential, this should be done in a constructive manner, through suggestion and not prescription. Students should be given autonomy

over their work and should at all times retain ownership. Any suggestions or comments that are made should not change the basic structure of what the students has achieved. Journal writing should be incorporated into as many classroom settings as possible, in interesting and creative ways.

The study attempted to identify important processes and skills that the students have gained. By noting this growth in each student, as well as by recording my observations from class as well as from interviews, I was able to assess the level of performance of each of the students.

From the questionnaires and the interviews, there were many responses. However, two things are significant: one is that the students indicated that they were satisfied with themselves and with their performance in their journal writing; the second is my intention to continue using guided journal writing as part of my technology class. The second, of course, is a direct response to the first. The students have demonstrated that the guided journal writing was a positive experience and from my observation of the students' writing, I am convinced that it should be an integral part of the course. I have come to understand more clearly why the student must be the centre of the educational process, for if we just teach them "stuff," then we fail ourselves and fail our students.

In analyzing this project, I have gained new insight into how to introduce more topics into journal writing. For the most part, I have used special events and issues, films, photography, and responses to occurrences in their lives, as the springboard for their journal writing. In working on this thesis, I have come to understand that there are limitations to the work. I realize that there are

particular contexts that must be taken into account: the students I am working with represent a specific group within a certain age range. I feel the results have significance for students at my college and, in turn, for students in other colleges. These students represent a cross section of college students, and problems faced by these students inform us of the value of guided journal writing with others.

The objective of our college is to ensure that academic planning and program delivery provide responsive quality education and provide programming and services that address diverse learner needs. We are stressing flexible delivery support services and employment success. I feel that the strength of journal writing is as a tool that can be used and should continue to be used in a variety of programs.

The project has also given me new insights on introducing more topics into journal writing. To date I have limited myself to events, special topics, film, photography and response to happenings in their lives. I now intend to try to spend more time on the personal aspects of their lives. As evident in their writings, the belief that students will not respond in writing if the topics are too personal is incorrect. I also intend to use the journal as a tool for my students in other classes, by my becoming more involved with other faculty and incorporating their needs into my students' journals. In this way, the writings they do in my class will affect their work in others as well.

My students continue to show me they have a desire to improve their writing; what better way than with journals. It is a practice that will help them if they are giving a speech, or jotting down important material for a work assignment. This

project has helped me see the need for developing more courses that have writing as a base. By introducing more writing strategies through journal writing, students will only improve, not just academically, but in other aspects of their lives.

How has this affected me? Students are confident in themselves and I am pleased with their responses, so that I intend to continue to use journals in my class and amend my teaching and reading practices to better equip me for this task. When I examine their writing, I am always surprised at their use of journals to frame their life experiences, as in this example, a letter I received from a student in April of 1995. At first I thought it was just a thank you note from a student that had taken a class of mine. When I read it I sat down and said to myself, "this is why I teach." The student had indeed written to say thank you, but on page two of the letter his real reason became apparent. His best friend had just committed suicide and the deceased boy's father had asked my student to give the eulogy. He said he thought of me and my lectures on the need for improved writing, communication and presentation skills. He said he put into practice what I had been talking about all semester and was up all night writing. The deceased boy's father was proud of the job this student had done, a job of had felt he was not capable of handling. I have come to believe even more that we must educate the whole student.

In the future I shall be increasing the percentage of the grade that is allowed for the journal from 15% to 25%. When one considers the importance of journals and how it seeps into every class and into the students' lives outside class, I see no justification for not raising the percentage.

I also intend to use the journal as a tool for my students in other classes. This can be done by becoming more involved with other faculty and incorporating their needs into my students' journals. In this way the writing they do in my class would not be limited to solely my class, but to others as well.

Who am I and what are my reflections as I sit at the end of this thesis? Complex questions. I decided to go into teaching at the age of forty and now seven years have passed. I am as excited as I was seven years ago about walking into a new class. My background was one of being based on the efficacy and speed at reading the public's mind, trying to see what others wanted before they knew they wanted it. My field was advertising and design. I worked in this for fifteen years with positions ranging from promotional work for a college to owning my own business.

I find teaching similar if not a direct parallel to working for myself. An odd statement, but not when one considers the similarities. If I do my research, my client or student is pleased. If I am creative, they pay attention. If I show excitement and energy, I get it back ten fold - from a client in terms of money, and from students in the form of quality work.

When I look back at the seven years, I think of the successes and failures. I decided to teach adults; I find them, for me, to be the most receptive. I feel that what I have to offer them can last and influence them throughout life.

Journal writing helps students deal with a myriad of issues that are troubling them and it opens my eyes to the fact that these are not clients in front of me but human beings.

I have had my heart touched and shed an occasional tear when I have read what these students "say" in their journals. If you think of this as overly dramatic, keep in mind the following. A young woman in my class had written, in her journal, about being bulimic. She came to talk to me about it afterwards and the sincerity in her words was frightening. I have heard of the symptoms and actions of those that are bulimic but until I talked to her and read her journal, they were just words. I recall her holding up her hand and saying that no one understood her problem. There on her hand, between her thumb and forefinger, were deep scars that would be with her for her entire life to remind her of her problem with food, the result of her shoving her hand down her throat in an effort to make herself vomit, and the nonvoluntary action of her teeth coming down and biting her own hand.

I read a student's journal only to find that a woman in my class, nineteen years of age, was being harassed by her ex-boyfriend. Her journal was a cry for help as this man had beaten her and had actually followed her into the college and was even registering just so he could watch her. I talked to her about this when discussing her journal, and I asked her if she needed help. Timidly she said "Yes", and I made arrangements for her to see someone I trusted in this field.

Stories like this are not the exception. When journal instructors talk to one another, these stories are revealed on a regular basis. Journals are tools for people to help release their emotions, even to call for help. It is difficult not to appreciate this when you read a journal from a young man of twenty who just found out that his ex-girlfriend, that he still cares for, is having an abortion.

A young Philippine woman and I were seated in my office, going through her journal when I came across a heart wrenching sentence. She was writing about her relationship with an ex-boyfriend who said to her that she was, "nothing but a sex machine, powered by rice." To the individual who says, why write journals, why keep them as part of our classroom and what can they show us about our students, I simply invite them to read a student's journal.

From the questionnaires and the interviews, two things stand out in my mind: the students indicating that they were pleased with themselves and their performance in their journal writing and my intention to continue using guided journal writing as part of my technology class. The students have demonstrated that the guided journal writing was a positive experience and from my observation of the students' writing, I am convinced that it should be an integral part of the course.

Students continue to impress me with their understanding of the world they live in, their dealings with others and with the problems that surround them. Their critical thinking skills grow, as do their abilities to struggle toward the issue, find the relevance of arguments and choose the most effective way to get this message across. When students were interviewed, they always talked about the "confidence" that journal writing gave them. They continue to use the term when they talk, not only of my class, but of how it has helped them in other classes. Most feel that they no longer panic when they have to write a report or essay for another class. They talk of how they are comfortable with editing their work and how they feel more in control rather than being "rolled over" by academic needs. What we are producing are students who are better ready to

enter the world. Their dealings with friends and family have improved, they no longer feel as uncomfortable in many situations, more in control.

Who makes up that contract to tell truths that so many journal keepers sign? Why do journals do their work so well in school? I think because schools and universities are weighted down, made dull by, that heavy rock--"Right! Now you've got what was in my mind. I'll give you an 'A'." But when two or more persons are finding out what's in the other's mind, then a new spirit arises, both questing and reciprocal. And that's what happens in a classroom where everyone, including the teacher, is keeping a journal and revealing parts of it. Often journals give us the privilege of dealing with each other's truths, with our gropings and mistakes; our mislaid plans and insights. A journal is like a cave. What will we find there? It's not like a textbook, with the questions at the end of each chapter and the teacher up in front of the room tomorrow to tell us we didn't find the right answers but that she has them for us, and there isn't time right now to discuss them.

(Macrorie, 1987:75)

This project has been invaluable for it has helped me to realize the need for developing more courses that have writing as their base. Some of the classes that I am presently teaching, and which will benefit from journals include Ethics and Technology, and Science and Society. By introducing more writing strategies through guided journal writing, students will improve their writing techniques as well as their critical thinking.

The advantage of teaching people in this age group is that it gives me the opportunity to share something with them that they may keep with them forever. It is always interesting to bump into an ex-student after a couple of years and chat with them. It never fails that they talk about journal writing, not calculus, stats, etc., but journals. They indicate that they were surprised at what they wrote and how some of them still use them as a means of dealing with issues and coping with the stress of life.

Having completed this thesis, I know that I will continue to do two things: use journal writing in my classes, and write in my own journal.

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APPENDIX A

NCTE Commission on Composition, Nov. 28, 1986

Journals Across the Disciplines

Language Features: The language of journals will look a lot like speech written down (Britton, 1975). As such, it will have the qualities we often associate with conversational language, among which the following should be noted.

1. Colloquial diction: the word choice will often be informal, characterized by short, simple words, contractions, abbreviations, and whatever other language shortcuts will serve to show the writer his or her thoughts with a minimum of exertion and a maximum of speed.
2. First Person pronouns: in many ways each journal entry is a matter of personal reflection on this or that issue - what the writer would also suggest to me, as an instructor, areas of need, where greater emphasis could be placed in my own teaching, and important implications for future classes in which I would incorporate guided journal writing.
3. Informal punctuation: whatever gets the job done is most likely to be used; expect more dashes than semicolon in journal entries; more underlining than quotation marks or footnotes.
4. Rhythms of everyday speech: journals are dialogical in nature, often documenting a running debate between a writer and one of his or her several selves; in such a conversation there is simply no point in writing in formal or pretentious prose.

5. Experimentation: this category leaves room for the unpredictable, for whatever form, style, voice, or persona a journal writer wants to try on for a while.

Cognitive Activities: It would be impossible to list here all the possible mental modes likely to be found in journal entries, as there would be virtually no limits to what a writer could try out. However, it is worth listing a few of those which serve an especially useful function to critical thinkers-those creatures so often praised in the literature of liberal education. Good journals will have liberal amounts of the following modes:

1. Observations: writers see something of interest and attempt to capture it in language. This activity is primary to scientists, who must witness in order to test, as well as to literary scholars, who must read in order to interpret.
2. Questions: writers use journals to formulate and record questions: personal doubts, academic queries, questions of fact, administration, and theory. It is more important, here, that there be questions than that yet there be answers.
3. Speculation: writers wonder aloud, on paper, about the meaning of events, issues, facts, readings, patterns, interpretations, problems, and solutions. The journal is the place to try out without fear of penalty; the evidence of the attempt is the value here.

4. Self-awareness: writers becoming conscious of who they are, what they stand for, how and why they differ from others.
5. Digression: writers departing as they write from what they intend to say, sometimes to think of personal matters and sometimes to connect apparently disparate pieces of thought.
6. Synthesis: writers putting together ideas, finding relationships, connecting one course or topic with another.
7. Revision: writers looking back at prior entries, realizing they have changed their minds, and using the journal to update and record their later thoughts. Ann E. Berthoff recommends this as a systematic practice and calls such endeavors "double-entry notebooks" (1978).
8. Information: Does the journal contain evidence that reading has been done, lectures listened to, facts and theories understood? Journals that read like class notebooks will be dull, but journals should give evidence that attention is being paid to course materials.

Formal Features: Certain formal features also indicate quality in journals. Consider the following:

1. Frequent entries: the more often a journal is written in the greater the chance of learning.
2. Long entries: the more writing one does at a single sitting the greater the chance of developing a thought or finding a new one.

3. Self-sponsored entrees: how often a student writer initiates writing without teacher prompts.
4. Chronology of entries: the key to journals is the location of each entry in a particular time; good journals have systematic and complete chronological documentation.

Guidelines for Assigning Journals

1. Explain that journals are neither "diaries" nor "class notebooks", but borrow features from each: like the diary, journals are written in the first person about issues the writer cares about; like the class notebook, journals are concerned with the content of a particular course.
2. Ask students to buy looseleaf notebooks. This way students can hand in to you only that which pertains directly to your class, keeping more intimate entries private.
3. Suggest that students divide their journals in several sections, one for your course, one for another course, another for private entries. When you collect the journal, you need only collect that which pertains to your own course.
4. Ask students to do short journal writes in class; write with them; and share your writing with the class. Since you don't grade journals, the fact that you write too gives the assignment more value.

5. Every time you ask students to write in class, do something active and deliberate with what they have written: have volunteers read whole entries aloud; have everyone read one sentence to the whole class; have neighbors share one passage with each other, etc. (In each case, students who do not like what they have written should have the right to pass.) Sharing the writing like this also gives credibility to a non-graded assignment.
6. Count but do not grade student journals. While it's important not to qualitatively evaluate specific journal entries - for here students must be allowed to take risks - good journals should count in some quantitative way; a certain number of points, a plus added to a grade, as an in-class resource for taking tests.
7. Do not write back to every entry; it will burn you out. Instead, skim-read journals and write responses to entries that especially concern you.
8. At the end of the term ask students to put in (a) page numbers, (b) a title for each entry, (c) a table of contents, and (d) an evaluative conclusion. This synthesizing activity asks journal writers to treat these documents seriously and to review what they have written over a whole term of study.

Of all writing assignments, journals may be the most idiosyncratic and variable. Consequently, good reasons exist to ignore any of these suggestions, depending on teacher purpose, subject area, grade level, or classroom context.

However, these suggestions will help many teachers use journals positively and efficiently in most school settings.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Do not include names. Please type your responses.

1. Did you enjoy the journal writing in your Technology course? Yes___ No
2. In your recent Technology class, did you consider journal writing valuable?
Yes___ No
3. How much writing did you do?
4. What stimulated you to write during the course?
5. Why did you write then? Assigned___ Personal
Percentage assigned___ Percentage personal
6. Do you write for yourself outside of class?
7. If your answer to No. 6 is "Yes," why do you write?
8. What types of things do you write?
9. In your recent Technology course, did you think journal writing helped?
Yes___ No
10. If your answer to No. 9 is "Yes," say in what ways it helped?
11. Did journal writing help you in a long-term way___; short term way?
12. If your answer to either one or both of the questions in No. 11 is "Yes,"
please explain how.
Long-Term way?

Short-Term way?
13. Do you think journal writing helps you learn? Yes___ No

14. If your answer to NO. 13 is "Yes," say in what way? ____
15. Do you think journal writing helps in developing critical thinking? Yes____No
16. If "Yes," say how?
17. Do you think the journal writing you did in class helped in your writing style? Yes
18. If your answer to Question 17 is "Yes," say how.
19. Has the journal writing helped in your grammar? Yes____ No
20. If your answer to Question 19 is "Yes," say how.
21. Do you find it easier writing after doing journal writing in your Technology class? Yes____ No
22. If your answer to Question 21 is "Yes," say how.
23. Should journal writing be an integral part of this course? Yes____ No
24. If your answer to Question 23 is "Yes," say why.
25. Do you think journal writing should be kept only as personal writing?
26. Do you think your writing has improved, stayed the same, become worse as a result of your journal writing?
27. Do you think that it helps in anything else besides writing? Yes____ No
28. If your answer to No. 27 is "Yes," identify what.
29. If your answer to No. 27 is "Yes," identify how.
30. How would you describe your journal writing class?
Interesting
Boring
Beneficial
Of no use
Other____ Name it
31. Explain your choice of answer to Question 30.
32. Did you like sharing your journal writing in class? Yes____ No
33. Did you find some topics too personal? Yes____ No

34. If your answer to No. 33 is "Yes," say why.
35. How would you make journal writing more interesting?
36. How would you make journal writing more beneficial to you as a student?
37. What did you think of your technology course? Give your own opinion below.
38. What did you think of the journal writing you did for your technology class? Give your own opinion.
39. Do you think it was necessary? Yes____ No
40. What didn't you like about the way your journal writing class was conducted?
41. How could it have been improved? Give your opinion.

PERMISSION FORM

I give permission to Joseph Amodeo to use material from my journal and other writing samples for research he is presently doing pursuant to his doctorate in education. I also give permission to use data obtained through interviews we have had. It is my understanding that my name will not be used in any of the material produced by him and that all material will be held therefore in the strictest of confidence to assure anonymity.

Name

Signature

Date

Where does this go?

My classes are comprised of Architectural Design Technicians, Mechanical Engineering and Animal Care Technician students. The average age is twenty-two and the ratio is 60/40 male to female. Eighty-five percent of my students have entered with their high school diplomas and the remainder are a mix of foreign students and students who have decided to return to school.

The Region of Halton and Peel encompasses a large area that covers 2,800 square kilometres stretching from Burlington to Mississauga. College studies show that the level of education is higher in this area than for the provincial average. This in turn is reflected in this region having a higher percentage of university and post-graduate students. When I look at my students, I see a culturally diverse classroom population which adds to the vitality of the group and often acts as a stimulus for writing and discussion.

My students are enrolled in the Faculty of Science and Technology at a suburban community college which serves the regions of Halton and Peel, and comprises one of the largest student bodies at 70,000. In the Faculty of Science and Technology, there are a total of 1,450 students registered currently for the 1995-1996 year.

My classes are comprised of Architectural Design Technicians, Mechanical Engineering and Animal Care Technician students. The average age is twenty-two and the ratio is 60/40 male to female. Eighty-five percent of my students have entered with their high school diplomas and the remainder are a mix of foreign students and students who have decided to return to school.

The Region of Halton and Peel encompasses a large area that covers 2,800 square kilometres stretching f to catch one's thoughts.

Cognitive Activities: It would be impossible to list here all the possible mental modes likely to be found in journal entries, as there would be virtually no limits to what a writer could try out. However, it is worth listing a few of those which serve an especially useful function to critica

The students I chose to participate in this study were representative of the students in the college, though not in the same proportion as they are found in the college community.

My research focused on seven students in my community college technology class. Michelle is twenty, white, from Brampton, and very interested in pursuing a career in communications. She is an average student, and works very hard to do outstanding work. Her writing skills are also average, but she demonstrates creativity in her work. She participates eagerly in class.

Patrick is twenty-two, white, and is a self-starter. He has been on his own since 16, after being in foster homes for several years. He is an average student, who missed a great deal of school, but who is eager to catch up. His writing skills have shown phenomenal improvement over the term.

Ron is nineteen, black, and from Mississauga, where he lives with his mother, since his parents were divorced. He was born in the Caribbean. Ron is an average student who is socially popular with everyone, but he could be an excellent student. His writing shows great creativity and he is always eager to participate in class discussions.

Jan is also nineteen, white, and lives with her parents in Brampton. She has two younger brothers, and is an excellent student. She will in all likelihood go to university.

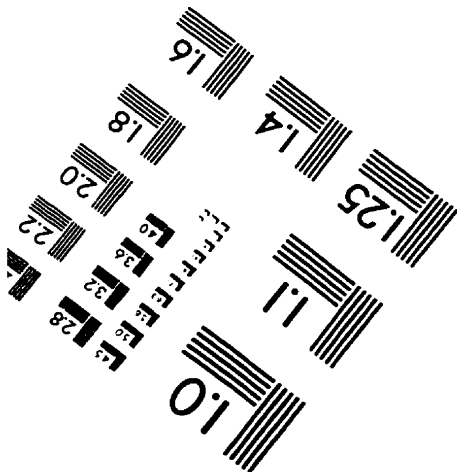
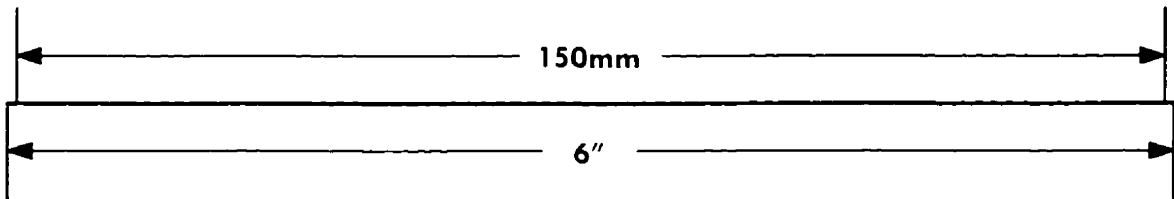
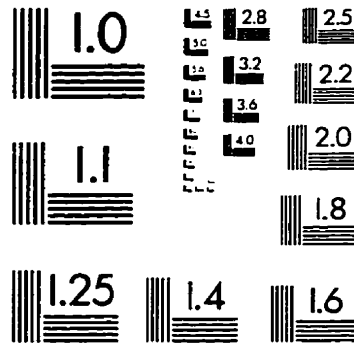
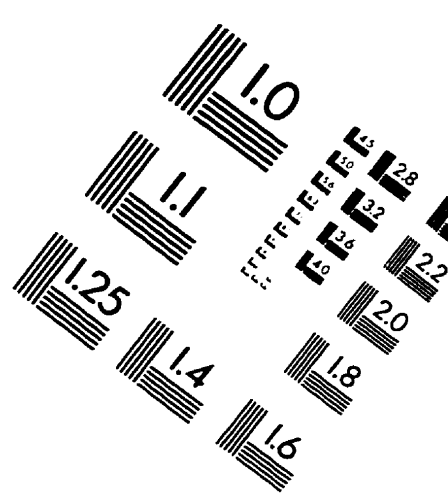
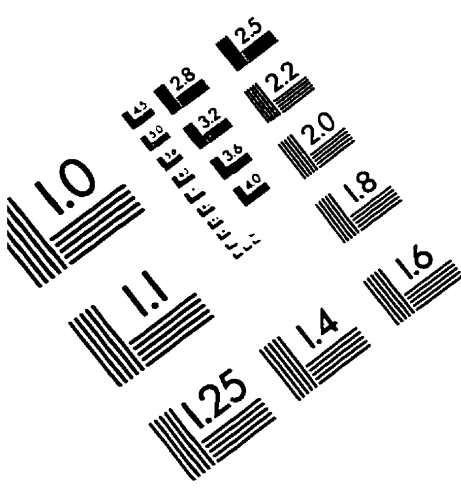
Bob is twenty-one, white, and lives at home in the Brampton area. He graduated from high school, and has a brother and sisters who are older than

him. His parents both work, and he is enrolled in the Technical Program at the College.

Analysis of Questionnaire

From the questionnaires, I gathered information about how the students felt about writing in general, about the writing done in class, what they perceived to have gained from the experience in terms of both writing skills and other relevant skills, and how the process has changed their approach to learning. This questionnaire included an assessment of the writing process in my class in terms of their learning.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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