

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Behavioral Sciences and Education

**NO MORE A STRANGER:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC LITERACY IN ADULT ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

A Dissertation in
Adult Education
by
Diane S. Thompson

© 2011 Diane S. Thompson

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
August 2011

The dissertation of Diane S. Thompson was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Edward W. Taylor
Professor of Adult Education
Dissertation Adviser
Chair of Committee

Patricia A. Cranton
Affiliate Professor of Adult Education

Shanetia Clark
Assistant Professor of Education

Julie Kearney
Assistant Professor of English Composition/Humanities

Gary W. Kuhne
Associate Professor of Education and Co-Professor in Charge of Graduate Programs in
Adult Education

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study was to identify how adult ELL community college students perceive their experience in the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing, and to explore their perceptions of the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy. To address this purpose, a research study was developed using the Academic Literacies Model (Lea and Street, 1998) as the conceptual framework and situated cognition and Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as the theoretical framework. The research was conducted among adult ELLs at an urban community college in central Pennsylvania using a sequential explanatory mixed method research design. This involved distributing 385 surveys in a range of college-level curricular classes and from the 385 surveys, capturing survey data from 30 adult ELLs. Based on the findings of these 30 surveys, 11 adult ELLs were recruited to participate in two interviews of approximately one hour. The findings from the qualitative data suggest, congruent with adult learning literature, that adult ELLs are influenced in their development of academic literacy by the social roles and responsibilities as well as prior learning and experiences. The findings also suggest that many participants had only a limited sense of what was expected in academic writing, referencing primarily Standard English and surface rhetorical features. However, participants who had experience with discipline-specific writing genres and contexts had a well-defined sense of the nature of academic writing, to include skills and enculturation in the academic community but also the development of an identity in relationship to the discourse community—all three of the perspectives posited by Lea and Street (1998). A number of implications for practice were also suggested by the findings in relation to pertinent literature, as well as recommendations for future research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xii
Acknowledgements.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background and Rationale of the Study	1
Community Colleges--Increasing Access and Inclusiveness in Higher Education	2
Addressing the Needs of Under-prepared Learners in Higher Education	5
English Language Learners in Higher Education	7
Preparation for College-level Work and Academic Literacy	9
Adult ELLs and Academic Literacy	12
Problem Statement	14
Purpose of the Study	15
Research Questions.....	15
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Academic Literacy	16
Academic Literacies Model	18
Communities of Practice and Legitimate Peripheral Participation.....	20
Overview of Methodology	21
Quantitative Portion of the Study	22
Qualitative Portion of the Study	24
Instruments for the Study.....	25
Significance of the Study.....	26

Definition of Terms.....	27
Assumptions and Limitations	29
Assumptions.....	29
Limitations	30
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	31
Conceptual Framework.....	32
Background and Development of the Academic Literacies Model	33
Academic Literacies Model	35
Discourse, Literacy, and New Literacy Studies.....	40
Discourse.....	40
Literacy	43
New Literacy Studies	45
Academic Literacy	46
Adult English Language Learners	48
Immigration and Linguistic Diversity.....	48
Educational Needs and English Acquisition.....	51
English Language Learners and Higher Education	53
The Community College in Higher Education	58
Development of Community Colleges.....	58
Distinctive Role and Mission of Community Colleges	59
Challenges Facing Community Colleges to Support Student Success	61
Composition Studies and College Composition	63

Early Development of Composition Studies.....	63
Basic Writing	67
Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC).....	69
The “Social Turn”—The Sociocultural Lens in Composition Studies	69
Contemporary Developments in Composition Studies.....	70
Situated Cognition and Communities of Practice.....	72
Situated Cognition	73
Cognitive Apprenticeship	74
Communities of Practice.....	75
Legitimate Peripheral Participation	78
Higher Education as a Community of Practice.....	79
Academic Discourse and Academic Literacy	82
Academic Discourse	82
The Nature of Academic Discourse	84
Academic Literacy	86
Basic Writing in Relation to Academic Literacy	87
College-level Composition Classes	91
Writing Across the Curriculum.....	94
Adult ELLs and Academic Literacy	99
Writing Preparation in ESL and ESP/EAP Classrooms	99
Academic Literacy for Graduate and Professional Adult ELLs	100
Academic Literacy for ELL Undergraduates.....	101

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	109
Mixed Methods Research Paradigm	110
Quantitative Research	110
Qualitative Research	111
Mixed Methods Research	112
Background of the Researcher	120
Participant Selection	121
Representative Sampling	121
Purposeful Sampling	123
Data Collection and Analysis.....	124
Quantitative Data	124
Qualitative Data	125
Introduction of the Participants.....	127
Ahmed.....	127
Christine.....	128
Eduard.....	128
Halima.....	128
Jeannette.....	129
Joseph.....	129
Linda	129
Mona	130
Pavel.....	130
Pilar.....	130

Zohreh	131
Verification Strategies	131
Quantitative Verification Strategies.....	132
Qualitative Verification Strategies.....	133
Ethic and IRB Compliance	134
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	136
Quantitative Findings.....	136
Demographic Data	137
Gender, Age, and Ethnicity.....	137
First Language	138
Number of Semesters Enrolled in College.....	139
ESL and Developmental English Classes Taken	140
Educational Goals and Anticipated Fields of Study	141
Employment.....	143
Attitudes and Experiences in Academic Writing.....	143
Confidence in Academic Writing Situations	143
Development of Academic Writing	145
Factors Contributing to Development as a College Writer.....	146
Summary of Quantitative Findings.....	147
Qualitative Findings.....	148
Early Influences on Language and Educational Aspirations	149
Early Language Experiences.....	150

Early Encouragement for Education.....	153
Transition into U.S. Higher Education—Determination in Negotiating Challenges.....	155
Personal Crises leading to Pursuit of Higher Education in the U.S.....	156
Language and Lifestyle Transitions into College	161
Influence of Previous Higher Education Experience.....	165
Challenges in the Development of Academic Writing	169
Gap Between Content Knowledge and the Ability to Communicate it in English	169
Specialized Content and Specialized Writing Genres	172
Support for Development of Academic Writing Competence and Confidence ..	176
Supportive Network	176
Reading as a Resource for Learning to Write.....	178
Regularly Speaking English as a Resource for Learning to Write	180
Working with Tutors in the Writing Center.....	182
Engaging in Online Discussions	184
Receiving Written feedback from Teachers	185
Using Models and Templates for Writing	187
High Expectations and Hard Work.....	189
Summary of Qualitative Findings.....	192
 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	 194
Adult Learning	195

Adult Social Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Learning.....	196
Prior Life and Learning Experiences	198
Early Support and Encouragement for Education	198
Prior Experience in Higher Education	198
Personal Background and Interests.....	199
Prior Literacy Experiences and Discourse Communities	200
ELLs and Community College Education	202
The Role of Community College for English Language Learning.....	203
The Role of Community College in Career and Workforce Preparation.....	205
The Heterogeneity of Adult ELLs in Community College.....	206
Communities of Practice and Situated Cognition Theoretical Literature	209
Nature of a Community of Practice	210
Nature of a Discourse Community	213
Legitimate Peripheral Participation to Full Membership.....	215
Literacies and the Development of Academic Literacy.....	220
Literacies.....	221
The Development of Academic Literacy	225
Academic Discourse	225
Academic Literacy	226
Experiences that Facilitate the Development of Academic Literacies	227
Implications and Recommendations for Practice	232
Support for Continued Development of English Fluency.....	232
Integration of Reading and Writing	234

Development of Rhetorical Dexterity	235
Writing Informed by Prior Life Experiences	236
Writing in Different Registers and Contexts	236
Authentic Engagement in Disciplinary Communities of Practice	238
Meaningful and Thoughtful Feedback.....	238
Transparency and Explicitness of Expectations	239
Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research	240
Limitations of the Study.....	240
Recommendations for Future Research	241
Conclusions.....	243
References.....	244
APPENDIX: SURVEY ON ACADEMIC WRITING	276

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Gender	137
Table 2: Participant Age Ranges	138
Table 3: Participant Ethnicity	138
Table 4. Participant First Language.....	139
Table 5. Participant Semesters Enrolled in College	140
Table 6. Participant Experience in ESL Classes	141
Table 7. Participant Enrollment in Developmental English (Developmental Reading and/or Writing.....	141
Table 8. Participant Educational Goals	142
Table 9. Participant Anticipated Field of Study	142
Table 10. Participant Employment	143
Table 11. Participant Confidence in Academic Writing Situations	144
Table 12. Participant Development as Academic Writers.....	145
Table 13. Participant Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Development as Academic Writers	147
Table 14. Interview Participant Profiles	149

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the conclusion of an extraordinary personal and intellectual journey like this, it is appropriate to reflect, if only briefly, on the help and support of those who have made this experience possible.

I would first like to thank all of those who have been part of the adventure from the Penn State Adult Education program. The members of the 2007 cohort have been tremendous resources in terms of intellectual stimulation, laughter and tears, support, encouragement, advice, and friendship. The faculty have been engaging, supportive, and models of good adult educators. In particular, I would like to recognize Dr. Edward Taylor, my wise and calm advisor and committee chair, Dr. Patricia Cranton, a guide and teacher as well as the other Adult Education faculty member on my committee, and Dr. Elizabeth Tisdell, a mentor as well as teacher. Dr. Taylor and Dr. Cranton have given hours of time in reading the chapters and offering feedback, but even more, over four years, have given freely of their wisdom, encouragement, guidance, patience, sympathy, and insight. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Julie Kearney and Dr. Shanetia Clark, my other committee members. Dr. Kearney provided invaluable help in understanding the role of research in composition studies, and Dr. Clark provided critical insights and questions about literacy and discourse.

This study would not have been possible without the support and participation of so many of my faculty colleagues, including all those who offered their class time for surveys and those who nominated students for the interviews and Jennifer Daley, who facilitated communication with international students. Thanks, of course, to the students who participated in the survey portion of the research. In particular, I am deeply indebted to the eleven remarkable adult ELLs

who gave so freely of their time and unselfishly shared their life experiences and writing to help me understand their academic journeys.

There are those who have been a part of this entire adventure, from the wistful yearnings many years ago and my impulsive application to the Adult Education program in 2007. They were there through the ups and downs, tears and frustrations, exhaustion, hard work, and triumph. They were endless sources of support, patience, laughter, encouragement, cheerleading, understanding, and love. Elizabeth, Caitlin (and Steve), Joel (and Becky)—I would not (and could not) have done it without you. And Nathan and Emma—pure joy!

And finally, my husband of 39 years, Brent. To speak of his support in all the practical day-to-day burdens that he has taken on for four years, his psychological and emotional support, his intellectual engagement as I wrestled with ideas, his patient listening, his voice of reason, his comic relief, his statistical consultation *extraordinaire*, his copy editing and technical support—all of these don't begin to capture his role in this adventure. He alone knows what he has done.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of a mixed methods study that sought to explore the factors that facilitate an adult English Language Learner's (ELL's) successful development of academic literacy in a community college environment, specifically competence in written academic discourse. This chapter includes a background and rationale for the study, a statement of the problem that motivates the study, a statement of the purpose of the study, an identification of the research questions, a discussion of the conceptual framework that guides the study, an overview of the research methodology, an expression of the significance of the study, definitions of key terms and concepts associated with the study, and a listing of assumptions and limitations related to the study.

Background and Rationale of the Study

One frequently expressed concern among higher education faculty and administrators relates to the increasing number of students at the college-level who struggle with competency in reading and writing for academic purposes (Ahrenhoerster, 2006; Carroll, 2002; Fallon, Lahar, & Susman, 2009; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Meagher, 1993; Spack, 1997; Sullivan, 2006; Wardle, 2009; Zamel, 1995). There are a number of factors inherent in any consideration of this concern. One is the increasing numbers of students in higher education (particularly in community college), a change driven by both societal dynamics and economic expectations. Closely associated with that increase is the growth of open admissions institutions, usually community colleges, with the corresponding increased inclusiveness and diversity of student populations. Along with the increasing inclusiveness of student populations is the rapidly growing role of basic or developmental English curricula designed to address the

challenges faced by learners assessed as “under-prepared” for college-level reading and writing. Adding to the numbers of these students is the increasing number of non-native speakers of English or English Language Learners (ELLs), many of them non-traditional or adult students. Besides these aspects of the shifting population demographics of higher education and particularly community college students, a key question within the academic disciplines is the contested nature of academic discourse and academic literacy. There is little consensus, even among scholars and practitioners in composition studies, on the attributes that define “academic discourse” or the specific qualities that characterize college-level writing or “academic literacy.” Finally, given the widespread agreement that the abilities to read and write appropriately for academic study are essential for a student’s success in college, it is important to identify and explore what aspects of the student’s experiences facilitate the development of those reading and writing competencies or academic literacy.

Community Colleges--Increasing Access and Inclusiveness in Higher Education

One of the major societal and philosophical dynamics in higher education in the twentieth century was the impetus for increased access to college, a challenge to the one-time tacit assumption college was for the privileged upper classes, the wealthy, the elite. Certainly colleges have been part of the U.S. cultural and educational landscape since the 1600s, but very significant changes in the higher education landscape began in the nineteenth century. These changes began with the expansion of access to higher education in the nineteenth century and the establishment of a number of “junior” or two-year colleges in the early twentieth century. Following World War II, with the enactment of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill of Rights (or “the GI Bill”), there was funding for millions of veterans to attend college. This was followed shortly by the Truman Commission Report which promoted the

establishment of a much more extensive system of publicly supported two-year colleges to be called “community colleges.” During the course of the 1960s, these colleges grew at a phenomenal rate, more rapidly than any other segment of higher education. They were responding to the need for local, accessible, affordable, and flexible opportunities to attend college, especially for adult students for whom the cost or residential nature of many four-year public and private institutions would be prohibitive. This movement tapped into the drive of millions of Americans to pursue higher education and made it possible (Stephens, 2001).

As the community college movement grew, the institutional leadership teams worked to identify their mission, during some periods being more oriented to a liberal arts and transfer purpose and during other times focusing more specifically on career or vocational two-year programs, including the emphasis in the 1980s on specialized or high tech training (Franco, 2002). They also became responsible for much English as a Second Language instruction for the increasing immigrant population. As community colleges have matured as institutions, they have typically become more comprehensive, with a wide range of programs and opportunities: career and vocational, technical, basic and developmental education, and pre-professional programs, as well as academic or liberal arts curricula (West, 2010).

Today, community colleges have become the largest sector of higher education, and by some definitions, the workhorses of higher education both in terms of the numbers and diversity of the populations they serve, but in terms of the range of needs and purposes they have to address. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2011), there are 1167 community colleges in the United States, enrolling 7.4 million credit-seeking students or 44% of all undergraduates in higher education and 43% of all incoming freshmen. Compared to those in other types of higher education institutions, community college students include disproportionate

numbers of students facing challenges in higher education: first-generation students, adult students (defined as 25 years of age or older), minority students, low income students, first- or second- generation immigrants, and other traditionally underrepresented learners (Schuetz, 2005). Many of these would be defined as non-traditional college students-- those as having any of the following attributes: having delayed enrollment in college, enrolling as part-time students with less than 12 credits a semester, being self-supporting financially, working full-time, having dependents to support, functioning as single parents, and having earned a GED rather than a high school diploma. By these criteria, the majority of community college students are non-traditional (Spellman, 2007).

Community colleges also enroll many students from a wide range of life situations. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2011) over 42% of community college students are first generation college students, and 44% of community college students are adults (Kasworm, 2005; Spellman, 2007). Among community college students, 15% have a primary language other than English (Badolato, 2010; Spellman, 2007). Nearly 45% of minority students who enroll in college are enrolled in community college (“2011 Community College Fast Facts”). Community colleges, from their inception, have been defined as open admissions institutions, established as having a mission to serve and be accessible to all local community populations, with accessibility defined in terms of admissions, social inclusiveness, support systems, cost, proximity, and flexibility of scheduling and programming (Franco, 2002). As we enter the 21st century that mission is becoming more critical, and the range of needs to be addressed is becoming increasingly complex (Badolato, 2010).

Addressing the Needs of Under-prepared Learners in Higher Education

With this rapid growth of community colleges and their mission of inclusiveness and accessibility, they have been faced with an increasing number of students enrolling who, for various reasons, were assessed to be under-prepared for the demands of higher education (Stephens, 2001). While the enrollment of under-prepared students is not unique to community colleges, the numbers and proportions of under-prepared students have been and continue to be dramatically higher at community college than in four-year institutions (Stephens, 2001).

In the late 1960s, during the early development of community colleges, the field of study that has come to be known as developmental education was established in order to support an increased understanding of the under-prepared learner and the most appropriate pedagogies and institutional practices for the support of those learners. Most importantly, specific basic or developmental curricula began to be implemented in colleges to speak to the needs of under-prepared students (Stephens, 2001). With the recognition that a large percentage of students enrolled in developmental or basic education are adult students, research on adult learners has informed the research in developmental or basic education as have pedagogical approaches grounded in the research in specific subject areas, e.g. writing or math (Boylan, 1999). Although originally conceived as a “remedial” curriculum, with a sense of the need for courses to fill a cognitive or academic deficit in fundamental skills like reading, writing, and math, the focus of the field today is more comprehensive and holistic, seeking to recognize and advocate for the most effective overall learning environment for under-prepared students (Illich et al, 2004).

Today, developmental or basic education has a major role in higher education for both institutions and students. The National Center for Education Statistics has documented in its most recent data collection in 2000 that three-fourths of all higher education institutions that

enrolled freshmen offered at least one area of developmental education, typically math, reading, or writing. Among community colleges, 98% offered developmental education, and 80% of public four-year colleges and even 59% of private four-year institutions also offered some pre-college or basic course work for under-prepared students (“Remedial Course Offerings,” 2003). Of all community college students nationally, 60% place into some area of developmental education, and one-third to one-half are assessed to be “under-prepared” in reading and writing skills and are placed into pre-college or developmental English curricula; many of those are adult or non-traditional students, and many are non-native speakers of English (Hassel & Giordano, 2009; McClenny, 2009).

Since their establishment and especially in light of the extremely diverse populations that they serve, community colleges have been characterized by high levels of student attrition, and community college researchers have analyzed models of attrition and retention and collected data on a number of variables related to student attrition and retention, including economic, societal, psychological, organization, and interactional variables (Schuetz, 2005). Unfortunately, despite the extensive research suggesting a number of contributing factors with implications for practice, student attrition is still a significant problem. Half of all first-year community college students leave higher education before the beginning of their second year. Nine of ten community college students intend to earn a certificate, associate’s degree, or transfer for a baccalaureate degree, but only 36% of them fulfill that goal within six years (Fike & Fike, 2008; McClenny, 2009; Schuetz, 2005). Obviously, there are many factors that contribute to attrition, but among the most telling is academic readiness: students unprepared for college coursework are more likely to discontinue their educations (Summers, 2003). Students who place into basic English are particularly at-risk largely because a major component of a student’s success in college is his or

her ability to read and write capably in the academic environment. (Ahrenhoerster, 2006; Badolato, 2010; Barta-Smith & DiMarco, 2009; Curtis & Herrington, 2003; Hansman & Wilson, 1998; Hassel & Giordano 2009; Sommers & Saltz, 2004).

English Language Learners in Higher Education

The fastest growing demographic in the nation as well as in community college are English Language Learners (ELLs) or non-native speakers of English. Whether as immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, international students, or second-generation immigrants (children of individuals who immigrated to the U.S.) whose primary language is not English, these students are an increasingly significant population.

According to a recent Current Population Survey from the U.S Census Bureau, in March 2000, 28.4 million foreign-born individuals lived in the U.S., over 10% of the country's population. Of this 10% of the population, almost half (43%) were between 25 and 44 years old (Curry, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). Another 27.5 million (another 10% of the population) were second-generation immigrants, born of foreign or mixed foreign and native-born parents (Curry, 2004; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Adding to this number, 1.8 million immigrants are arriving every year, many of them non-native English speakers (Conway, 2010; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007).

The first-generation and second-generation adult immigrant population is an extremely diverse group, bringing great cultural richness to the country and the institutions they are engaged with, but that diversity can also present a range of challenges. These individuals bring a wide range of linguistic, religious, cultural, and racial backgrounds; they also come from a wide variety of skills, educational traditions, professions, and accomplishments.

Their linguistic diversity is one of the primary challenges that immigrants face, and language-related challenges are particularly significant in terms of their functional success in day-to-day life, the workforce, and education. Certainly some immigrants are from English-speaking countries, and many others come from environments where they studied English quite extensively before coming to the U.S. However, based on the 2000 U.S. census, more than 35 million adults are non-native speakers of English (almost 15% of the U.S. population), and of these, 9 million do not speak English well or at all (Conway, 2010). It is estimated that 70% of new immigrants as well as a large number of second-generation immigrants in the U.S. have limited English proficiency, a number estimated at over 23 million in 2005 (Conway, 2010; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007).

For these non-native speakers of English, becoming functional in English is critical to their ability to relate effectively in their living situations—housing, employment, medical care, and community services. However, for many of them, learning English at a functional level is only the first step. In the long-standing tradition of U.S. immigrants, the path to a better life frequently takes a student through higher education, and that brings another range of challenges. Community colleges are the primary avenue for entry into the world of higher education for many ELLs, particularly the adults, because of their proximity, cost, flexible schedules, range of programs (including English as a Second Language, which is often not available about four-year institutions), and open admissions policies. Because of this, there is a great responsibility and opportunity for community colleges to be an essential resource for this group.

Often, even if ELLs have studied English in their countries of origin or have an extensive educational background in their home culture, college admission processes place them into an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum (either credit or non-credit) for additional work

on aural and oral English, as well as reading and writing. After completing the ESL sequence, typically ELLs move into a basic or developmental English (reading and/or writing) curriculum as preparation for further academic work at the college level. It is this link that can be a pivotal experience for any student, and particularly an ELL, as he or she pursues higher education.

Typically, basic or developmental English is defined as the academic experience that prepares a student to be successful in college-level academic reading and writing work (Kozeracki, 2002).

This is a critical competency, as being successful in college-level academic work for many is the key to the “American Dream”—a college degree or degrees, access to professional opportunities, personal and financial stability, and a better life for the ELL student and his/her family, often for generations.

Preparation for College-level Work and Academic Literacy

Creating avenues for students to be successful in their college-level academic work is the primary focus of basic or developmental education. The purpose of developmental English programs from their very inception has been explicitly to prepare students, both native speakers and ELLs, for college-level work, with the recognition that reading and writing are absolutely essential abilities in academic success. The approaches and perspectives for the field of basic English, however, have experienced substantial evolution since the inception of the curricular area. In 1977, one of the seminal works addressing the writing needs of under-prepared students was Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations*, (Adner-Klassner & Glau, 2005). As research in basic English grew through the 1970s and 1980s, a range of perspectives was offered by different theorists positing different understandings of the needs of developmental learners in preparing for college-level academic work. One perspective was that basic writers had not attained the “level of cognitive development that would allow them to form abstractions” and

that active workshop pedagogies should be used to stimulate abstract thought in basic writers (Lunsford, 1979). Another perspective challenged what many have articulated as a “deficit” model in basic writers, suggesting that a purely cognitive lens for understanding basic writers was seriously limited. This perspective identified a social constructivist approach as being much more useful, as it suggested that basic writers are shaped by sociopolitical realities like race, gender, and class much more than by cognitive attributes or development (Rose, 1988). Another consideration that has informed scholarship in the field of basic writing within composition studies is the nature of students’ discourse communities and the academic discourse community in particular, noting the challenges of mastering not only fluency in but judgment about the use of different discourses (Bartholomae, 1985,1987,1993).

Moving beyond perspectives about basic writing and work with under-prepared writers, there are a number of approaches to identifying the nature of the reading and writing demanded in higher education. One curricular and pedagogical approach to the challenge of identifying the nature of academic literacy and helping students develop it was the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement begun in the 1980s, now sometimes referred to as “discipline-specific literacy” (Stacey, 2009). In this approach, students are not only required to write extensively in their various content areas, but they are taught to write using the conventions and discourse styles associated with the different disciplines (e.g. history, psychology, business law, literature, economics, laboratory science). Generally, Writing Across the Curriculum programs shared the philosophy that writing instruction should happen across the academic community and throughout a student's undergraduate education. This approach also acknowledged the differences in writing conventions across the disciplines and posited that students could best

learn to write in their areas by practicing those discipline-specific writing conventions (“Writing Across the Curriculum: An Introduction, “ para. 1).

Other researchers and practitioners concerned with competency in college-level writing have argued that the development of competency in academic writing is not a matter of having to be trained in different genres and conventions for every new area of study. It is much more than some of the earlier conceptions of error and correctness or simple writing skills; in fact, it is more than enculturation and socialization into higher education or specific disciplinary study. They posit academic literacy as a situated literacy practice in higher education and the disciplines, highly contextualized and informed by the social and cultural environment (Lea & Street, 2001).

This notion of “academic literacy” or “academic literacies” as a model for understanding the challenges of reading and writing in higher education has its roots in the 1990’s practice-based research and literacy work by Mary Lea and Brian Street in the UK as the English higher education system began to experience the kinds of institutional openness and diversification of student populations that the United States has experienced since the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing from work in the field that has come to be known as “New Literacy Studies,” Lea and Street began to frame an “academic literacies” model, outlining the levels and approaches that have characterized writing instruction of students new to the Academy. The first level is a sense of writing as skills-oriented, with a focus on student writing as a technical skill, with an emphasis on surface clarity and rhetorical features (grammar, word choice, spelling, sentence and paragraph structure, organization, etc.). The next level is grounded in the recognition of student writing in the Academy as a function of academic socialization into the culture, disciplines, and genres of higher education. The third level, which is the most comprehensive in including the

other two, sees literacy or literacies as social practices within the academy, but also rooted in the development of a different epistemology and process of identity construction for the student as a member of a new discourse community (Street, 2007).

Adult ELLs and Academic Literacy

The initiation into the academic environment and the practices of literacy in that environment is pivotal and challenging for any student, regardless of his/her background. Certainly this transition has many other social, psychological, and cultural dimensions for most developmental or basic education students, but for ELL students, particularly adults, the challenges may seem monumental. As noted by Curry (2004),

For [students] who are English Language Learners (ELLs)...entering and succeeding in U.S. institutions of higher education involve more than simply studying a new language. Students must also learn the specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking that characterize college-level communication. These academic literacy practices represent particular views of the world, uses of language, and ways of constructing knowledge within academic disciplines. Although they are dynamic and evolving, these practices tend to manifest the dominant cultures of those inside academia, a culture which many ELLs may not share. Learning academic literacy involves engaging in a range of academic social practices, more than learning to speak or write in a new language. Rather, gaining academic literacy involves negotiating various academic discourses in multiple circumstances (p. 52).

Most take the position that developmental English students in community college, and especially ELL students, need explicit instruction in academic discourse and literacy (Benesch, 1988). If they do not bring academic cultural capital or experience in higher education in their

native languages, they likely have limited experience with certain linguistic and academic activities such as reading critically, taking notes from readings and lectures, formulating questions, and writing coherent text (Brammer, 2000). For ELLs, academic discourse poses challenges at a variety of levels: the linguistic aspects of word, sentence, and text-structure; the necessary background knowledge and context for grasping the content; and critical thinking skills to draw inferences and make judgments (Snow, 2005). Certainly, these cognitive or intellectual tasks related to language and rhetoric are daunting enough, but another level of difficulty, especially for ELLs, may also be associated with the fact that the academy is grounded in a white, middle class culture, and the discourse may seem alien and uncomfortable (Curry, 2004). However, to participate and be successful in the conversations of the academy and the related professional communities, ELL students need to be able to negotiate these tensions and the complexity of the enterprise.

In light of the numbers of ELL students, particularly adult ELL students, entering the world of higher education through the community college, the challenges they face become a significant area for community college educators to understand and address. Since the ability of ELLs to develop the complex constellation of competencies known as academic literacy is pivotal in their success, an understanding of the factors that facilitate their growth in this area is also extremely significant. Of particular importance is the experience of adult ELL students, not simply because of their significance in the overall population of ELL students in community college, but because they face even greater challenges as they negotiate higher education—personal and family responsibilities, social demands, anxieties about their ability to succeed, a longer time outside of a school-related environment, and the high stakes related to their success in relation to the overall welfare of their families.

Problem Statement

Despite the numbers of adult ELLs in community college and the high stakes of their educational endeavors, little research in the field of adult education has been focused on their particular challenges in college. From the perspective of Adult Education, extensive research has been done in Adult Basic Education programs and community-based English literacy programs for adult ELLs (Buttaro, 2002; Hubenthal, 2004; Kim, 2005; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), but little attention has been paid to the development and learning of these students when they enter community college (Kasworm, Sandman, & Sissel, 2000).

The experience of ELLs, including adult ELLs, in an academic environment has been considered by writers and practitioners in second language learning, ESL, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) as well as in higher education and community college research. The focus of this research, however, is the dynamic of language learning or the institutional constructs for second language learning rather than the students' experiences in academic literacy after the initial language learning experiences.

Most of the work that has been done focusing on the development of academic discourse by adult students or adult ELL students has been done in the fields of community college or higher education research, basic education or basic writing research, or in composition studies. There is a large body of research related to basic or developmental writing and community college research and practice which considers developmental writing students and classes in general. Much of this research addresses the academic success of basic writing students as measured by GPA or completion of their developmental education sequences or their persistence in other semesters as well as various pedagogies and institutional programs (e.g. computer-assisted learning, learning communities). Other research has focused on students' psychosocial

adjustments, self-esteem, and the role of support services. While ELLs and adult ELLs would be part of the groups in this research, their unique experiences and learning dynamics are seldom the focus of such research. In the literature within the field of composition studies, there is a great deal of conceptual and some empirical research on college-level composition and writing in disciplinary contexts, but there is little focus on adult learners in general or adult ELLs.

With very little consideration in the adult education literature of adult ELLs' experiences in higher education and limited consideration of adult ELLs' experiences in the literature related to academic literacy, there is clearly a place for research informed by the literature of composition studies and basic writing but grounded in adult education theory and practice and a consideration of the unique learning dynamics of adult ELLs. What is needed is research focused on adult ELLs, as they negotiate and make meaning of their experiences in academic discourse in their early semesters of college. Even more important would be to understand from the experiences of adult ELL students who are negotiating the transition into academic literacy what factors have been most valuable in facilitating that development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods research study was two-fold: to identify how adult ELL community college students perceive their experience in the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing, and to explore their perceptions of the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the research was guided by the following questions:

- 1) How do adult ELLs in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced?

- 2) Among adult ELL students assessed by faculty to be successful in academic writing competency, what factors, attitudes, and experiences have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy?

Conceptual Framework

Informing this study is the Academic Literacies Model (ALM) based on research done in the UK by Mary Lea and Brian Street (1998, 2000). The Academic Literacies Model is explicitly drawn from the perspectives of the New Literacy Studies and the theoretical framework of the adult learning theory of situated cognition and communities of practice as posited by Lave and Wenger (1991). The model of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation ground this conceptual framework solidly in adult education literature.

Academic Literacy

Typically in a U.S. college setting, developmental composition and first-year composition courses have the institutional and public expectation of serving as general academic writing skills instruction, charged with carrying out the task of “teaching students to write for what comes next” in their academic environment (Fulkerson, 2005; Wardle, 2009). In the UK, there is typically no formal college-level composition coursework, and students learn to write for academic purposes as they pursue their curricular studies and work with writing tutors. However, the success of this endeavor is inconsistent at best. One of the common themes among college faculty and administrators in the United States (Sullivan, 2006; Pekins, 2006; Wardle, 2009) and the United Kingdom (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Turner, 2001) is that “college students can’t write” or “college students can’t grasp the material the way they need to.” In fact, one of the major concerns in the extensive literature on persistence and retention of college students revolves around the widespread difficulty that many students have in navigating the

practices of academic discourse and the problems that this creates for them in persistence (Powell, 2009)

Since the early 1990s, there has been a systematic body of scholarship addressing issues relating to academic writing coming from a range of research areas: linguistics and discourse analysis, composition studies, literacy studies, adult education, community college education, and higher education. Each field addresses the issues and questions slightly differently, but at heart all deal with the same issues: what are the cultural, contextual, and intellectual components of successful writing at the college level? What models most effectively communicate how students construct knowledge in academic environments? How do students most successfully develop these competencies? How do they most effectively transfer knowledge constructed in one rhetorical situation to others? (Curry, 2004; Fallon, Lahar, & Susman, 2009; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Lea & Street, 1998; Lea, 1998; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Wardle, 2009).

A central question in this discussion is “What is the nature of the experience or set of competencies known as ‘academic literacy.’?” At its most comprehensive level, academic literacy is the constellation of “specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking that characterize college-level communication. These academic literacy practices represent particular views of the world, uses of language, and ways of constructing knowledge within academic disciplines” (Curry, 2004, p. 52).

Practically speaking the acquisition or development of academic literacy involves engaging in a range of academic social practices, conventions, and interactions as well as intellectual language-related activities (Curry, 2004). In order to be successful in their personal and educational goals, “[students] must understand lectures, participate in academic conversation, comprehend challenging texts, and form reasoned opinions and other focused

interpretations. They need to write with clarity, conviction, and sophisticated thought” (Cruz, 2004). They need to negotiate all these activities in a variety of academic settings and discipline genres. Academic literacy and control of academic discourse plays a pivotal role for all students, and particularly for students who are new to the academic environment, including most adult students and adult ELLs. Without it, students may have difficulty passing gate-keeping examinations or courses that require large amounts of reading and writing. For many “academic literacy is a hidden barrier that stymies their educational efforts” (Curry, 2004, p. 52).

Ultimately, students without sufficient competence with academic literacy may lack the ability to move through the academy and achieve the goals that may be very important in their lives.

Academic Literacies Model

The research on models and essential strategies for the development of written academic discourse is extensive and thoughtful. In the conceptual framework for this study, Lea and Street (1998; 2000) posit a model of academic literacies which recognizes that learning in higher education involves adapting to new ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting, and organizing knowledge. The practices of academic literacy—specifically writing—are the “central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 157). These practices are grounded in the cultural and contextual components of college. While most other approaches to understanding and teaching academic writing or writing in the disciplines focus on how students can adapt their writing to the style of the academy, the Academic Literacies Model is deeper and more fundamental in its understanding, setting up writing as an issue of epistemology and identity rather simply an issue of skills and socialization (Lea & Street, 1998). In explaining the theoretical basis for this approach to academic literacy, Lea notes “an academic literacies

approach views the institutions in which academic practices take place as constituted in, and as sites of, discourse and power. It sees the literacy demands of the curriculum as involving a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields, and disciplines” (p. 165). Research grounded in this model has found the nature of academic writing to be more than issues of surface expression or socialization into discourse modes. It certainly encompasses skills and socialization, but it extends to ways of knowing in the Academy and the transition from “outsider” to “insider” in the world of academic discourse.

Most important are the dynamics of the development of academic literacy for students, and, for this study, for adult ELL students. Because of their extensive work with adult learners in open admissions higher education settings, Lea and Street’s work with the Academic Literacies Model (ALM) is grounded in two broad principles in adult education. First, knowledge is constructed through the learner’s experience of learning. Consequently, the learner’s perception of the learning context and the process of constructing knowledge based on prior experience and the current learning environment seemed to be the pertinent aspects to explore.

ALM is also drawn heavily from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) with adults who challenged the transmission and assimilation models of learning and posited that students learn when they are able to grasp the practices that they need to master to become full members of a community. Lave and Wenger outlined the relationship between identities, different levels of membership, and the importance of discourse in a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lea, 1998). The intersection of the consideration of academic literacy and adult learning theory makes this model a power conceptual framework.

Communities of Practice and Legitimate Peripheral Participation

The theoretical framework of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) has a seminal place in adult education literature. This framework is underpinned by a social constructivist perspective and the assumption that learning is situated in a specific context (situated cognition). Communities of practice are “formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor....” (Wenger, 2007). They are characterized by three qualities: an identity defined by a shared domain of interest; relationships developed as members learn from each other and share information; and an identity of practitioners who develop a shared repertoire of resources and practices (Wenger, 2007). Movement into a community of practice occurs not simply by development of knowledge or skills, but by participation in the discourses and activities situated in the communities. Lave and Wenger posit that learners begin their involvement in the community by learning at the periphery and then gradually moving into full participation in the actions and discourse of the community, moving from being “outsiders” to being “insiders” (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Clearly, there are significant applications of this theoretical framework to the purpose of this study. As a student pursues academic study, he or she moves from peripheral to full involvement in the community of practice that defines higher education and disciplinary study. In this sense, a student’s increasing involvement in the academic discourse community is a cognitive apprenticeship, the embedding of learning in activity, making purposeful use of the social and intellectual context (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). This understanding of academic literacy in the context of communities of practice literature not only provides a solid

basis for the Academic Literacies Model but firmly grounds this approach in adult education literature.

Overview of Methodology

Mixed methods research is formally defined as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Philosophically, it is grounded in pragmatism, and it is seen to be inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2002). In the spirit of pragmatism, a mixed methods approach uses “methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality” (Patton, 2002, p. 72). The most fundamental concern is the research question and what research methods will offer the best chance to obtain useful answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Citing Johnson and Turner (2003) and this fundamental principle of mixed methods research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) recommend that “researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses” (p. 18). Or, as Patton (2002) indicates, the researcher “can build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach” (p. 307).

In this study, I used a mixed methods approach to my research. Mixed methods research provided the flexibility to address the research questions that were central to my study, rather than have the study shaped by a particular methodology or the inherent limitations in that methodology. As noted in Creswell (2003),

[If the purpose is] identifying factors that influence an outcome, ...then a quantitative approach is best...On the other hand, if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done in it, then it merits a qualitative approach...A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (p. 21).

Since the study sought to both identify and explore issues related to the phenomenon of academic literacy and competence in academic writing, a mixed methods design was clearly indicated.

The study was a sequential explanatory study, with the quantitative data in the form of survey data gathered and analyzed first to provide context and to inform the development of the qualitative research. Following the survey and analysis of the survey data, the qualitative data were gathered in a series of purposeful, semi-structured interviews with adult ELL students in college-level disciplinary courses at a community college. The priority of the study was qualitative, as it is the thick and descriptive detail in experiences of the students that is most instrumental in illuminating the personal and educational experiences that have empowered and supported their development in academic literacy. As the research questions that guided this study stipulate an identification of factors and then an in-depth exploration of those factors, a sequential explanatory design was most appropriate.

Quantitative Portion of the Study

In this sequential mixed methods study, the quantitative portion of the research was done prior to the qualitative portion. The goal of the quantitative portion of the study was to identify pertinent aspects of students' experiences with academic writing that can be further explored in the qualitative portion of the study. For this study, the quantitative portion of the study was the

distribution of a survey to 385 students enrolled in college-level disciplinary courses at the participating community college. The goal of the sampling associated with this portion of the study was representativeness, and that was achieved by administering the survey to students at the largest and most diverse campus of a large urban community college. The students sampled were enrolled in a variety of college-level disciplinary courses. The study was focused on adult English Language Learners, but for ease of distribution, the survey was administered to all students in the selected sections. The data used for the study, however, included only the surveys done by those students who self-identified as meeting the criteria of being 25 years of age or older and having a language other than English as their first language. This sampling design was chosen in order to achieve representativeness of the population of adult ELL students enrolled in college-level courses in community college (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

The survey included standard demographic questions such as age, gender, ethnicity, primary or initial language, and employment status; it also included questions related to the ESL and basic English courses that participants had taken, and the participant's course of study and academic goals. The second part of the survey included 3 sections of items related to academic writing experiences and attitudes. The first section of this second part of the survey was a series of statements relating to confidence in various academic writing situations, with a five-point Likert-type scale allowing the participant to indicate the frequency of that perception of confidence. The next section was four statements expressing experiences in academic writing, with participants permitted to indicate as many as were applicable. The final section was a series of activities or learning environments often referenced in the literature as supportive of the development of academic literacy, and the participants were encouraged to check as many as they had found to be helpful in their development of academic writing competency.

Qualitative Portion of the Study

The qualitative portion of the study followed the gathering of the quantitative survey data, and the selection of participants was done as a purposeful sample, using the sampling of special or unique cases (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The goal of this sampling was to find individuals who could provide the richest and most pertinent information and insight related to the purpose of the study (Paisley & Reeves, 2001). The qualitative research took the form of semi-structured interviews of this purposeful sample of subjects.

The three criteria for the participants were 1) that the participants were adult students (in community college being understood as it was the context for the research); 2) that they were ELL students (i.e. having a non-English language as their initial or native language); 3) and that they had developed a level of academic literacy and competence in academic writing that enabled them to be successful in writing for their disciplinary coursework. The first two criteria were quite easily identified, but the third was more difficult to define and identify by the very nature of the limiters (“development of level of academic literacy” and “competence in academic writing”). A purely self-selected pool of participants or a snowball or chain selection has the problematical aspect of the accuracy of a student’s self-perception of writing competence (Krueger & Dunning, 1999). Consequently, the participants were drawn from students suggested by the faculty members in a range of college-level disciplines. The faculty members were given the basic criterion that the students has developed a level of academic literacy and competence in academic writing that has enabled them to be successful in writing for their disciplinary coursework, but they were allowed to be the arbiters of students that they considered to have met that criterion. Eleven participants were selected for the qualitative portion of the study based on these three criteria, seven women and four men.

Instruments for the Study

The initial portion of the research study was quantitative, employing an anonymous survey with demographic data and attitudinal. The instrument was developed and piloted with a group of community college students in disciplinary courses, modified based on feedback, and then administered to the selected sections of the courses. The data obtained from the survey was coded using SPSS software and frequency tables developed.

The second portion of the research study was conducted as semi-structured interviews on a purposeful sample of participants of eleven adult ELL community college students who were identified as having developed a level of academic literacy and competence in academic writing appropriate for academic success at the lower division level. An interview guide was followed to maintain basic standardization across the interviews; however, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the necessary flexibility in the phrasing, sequence and follow-up of questions necessary to explore the participant's individual experiences in relation to academic writing (Paisley & Reeves, 2001).

Two semi-structured interviews were done with each participant, both of which were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The first interview typically lasted approximately one hour. The participant was asked to bring a piece of academic writing as an artifact for discussion at the second interview. At the second interview, the participant shared insights and experiences in relation to academic writing and particularly the development of the writing sample. During this interview, the questions reflected aspects of experiences and attitudes in relation to academic writing based on the survey. Following the finalization of the two transcripts, a constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the data, with categories of responses identified and integrated into emergent themes, (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Significance of the Study

One of the most pressing issues in community college research is the challenge of helping students (particularly underprepared students) to be successful in their academic work and to be prepared for professional endeavors as they leave academia. A student's success is not measured simply in retention/persistence statistics or even GPA at the community college. While there are many dimensions to the concept of success in education, prominent among them is a student's ability to learn effectively and function competently and confidently in the academic environment, including in continued study in a baccalaureate program if that is the student's educational goal (Wardle, 2009; Fulkerson 2005). A critical aspect of this competence and confidence is the ability to handle the demands of reading and writing in the academic environment referenced in much of the literature as "academic literacy" (Blanton, 1998; Fox, 1999; Lea, 1998; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Spack, 1998; Zamel, 1998).

One of the groups most deeply impacted by a lack of preparation for college-level discourse is the rapidly growing population of adult English Language Learners (ELLs) in community colleges (Curry, 2004). The importance of this group is borne out in the sheer numbers enrolled in community colleges as well as the personal and societal impact of these adults as they pursue educational paths that will enable them to support themselves and their families and to contribute in meaningful ways in employment and professional capacities (Curry, 2004). While there is an emerging theoretical framework and body of literature and research identifying elements and pedagogies that support the development of academic literacy, little work has been done to focus specifically on adult ELLs and very little work done in this context in terms of adult education theory and practice. The exploration of the experiences of these adult learners using a theoretical lens grounded in adult education learning theory should not

only illuminate distinctive features of the adult learning dynamic but should contribute to a body of literature in adult education that has not be richly developed.

Certainly this study would have significance in the related fields of community college retention research and English composition pedagogy, including basic writing pedagogy. Given the mission of community colleges to be responsive to the needs of communities and community populations and to be consciously learner-centered, work that illuminates the challenges of a critical and growing population and suggests aspects of the educational environment that support their persistence and success would be extremely valuable. Also, since the field of English composition studies focuses on the pedagogies that support the development of student writing in the academic arena, this research would also have great significance in that field.

Finally, my professional practice for the last nineteen years has been as an English faculty member at a community college, with much of my teaching being done in basic and college-level composition courses. A range of professional journals, forums, and national conferences are focused on what it takes to help college students develop the writing skills that will enable them to grow intellectually, personally, and academically. However, there are clearly gaps and inconsistencies at both the theoretical and practical level, as students continue to struggle with college-level writing and faculty continue to struggle with how to help their students. It is my personal and professional commitment to the success of community college students (particularly adult students) in their educational endeavors and their personal development that has driven this particular study.

Definition of Terms

There are several key terms that will be used in the discussions related to this study, and it is important to establish working definitions for those terms.

1. Basic or developmental writing—a discipline of English composition studies which focuses on the writing of students in higher education who are designated as “underprepared” by an institutional metric (placement test, standardized testing scores). Typically, basic writing students are entering freshman (Bartholomae, 1993). In earlier years and even in some contexts today, basic writing is referenced as “remedial” writing.
2. English Language Learners (ELLs)—a term used to describe students who are in the process of acquiring competence in English language skills and knowledge. In some cases, these students have been designated as “limited-English-proficient (LEP)” (“Glossary”).
3. Adult learners—learners in either formal or informal situations who are 25 years of age or older.
4. Discourse—“a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network” (Gee, 1998, p. 51)
5. Literacy—the formal and conscious learning (through teaching) of a secondary language or discourse beyond the primary language or discourse that the individual has become enculturated to or acquired through natural and functional experiences (Gee, 1998).
6. Academic literacy—the constellation of “specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking that characterize college-level communication” (Curry, 2004, p. 52). These practices represent distinct views of the world, uses of language, discourses, and ways of constructing knowledge within academic disciplines (Curry, 2004).
7. Communities of practice—groups of people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor and share a concern or purposeful

engagement in an activity and learn how to do it better as they work together (Wenger, 2007). They are bound by “intricate, socially constructed webs of belief, which are essential to understanding what they do” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 33).

8. Cognitive apprenticeship—“an approach to learning that embeds learning in activity and makes deliberate use of the social and physical context of the learning experience” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 32).
9. Situated cognition—the learning theory that posits that learning for everyday living (which includes practice as professionals) happens only when people interact with the designated community (including its history and cultural values and assumptions), the tools at hand, and the pertinent activities of the community (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

This study was founded on several assumptions. The first was a fundamental principle in developmental education, that most students deemed “under-prepared” based on a college’s placement or entrance criteria can be successful in their desired academic goals with appropriate support, pedagogy, and opportunity.

The second assumption was that competence in college-level writing is part of a broader set of competencies known as “academic literacy.”

The third assumption was that academic literacy is best understood as a cognitive apprenticeship in the context of a student’s participation in a community of practice with a situated cognition model of learning.

The fourth assumption was that faculty members who were asked to recommend adult ELL students as competent college-level writers would be able to identify them with reasonable accuracy.

The fifth assumption was that students would be able to thoughtfully reflect on their intellectual and personal development in writing and articulate the elements of the experience.

Limitations

There were a number of potential limitations for this study. First was that with a qualitative component to the study, its generalizability is limited. It reflects only the experiences and perceptions of a small group of adult ELLs at a particular large urban community college in central Pennsylvania.

Second, as the study was dependent on volunteer participation in terms of the faculty as well as students, there may have been some biases regarding their experience with the academic writing of students that colored their interest in the study.

Third, the qualitative portion of the study relied heavily on student reflections and perceptions of their development of academic literacy as they understand both the concept and the process.

Fourth, since I am an administrator at the college where the study was done, the students might have been somewhat influenced in their participation and responses because of my role in the academic environment. Although my administrative responsibilities are not directly related to the departments of the college that support writing instruction and in no way did I introduce my role at the college as a persuasive factor in my interactions with them, it was inevitable that they were aware of my role. That could have been a biasing factor.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to identify how adult ELL community college students perceive their experience in the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing, and to explore their perceptions of the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy. The term “academic literacy” has been used in much of the conceptual and empirical literature to reference the abilities to read and write that are required for success in an academic environment of curricular course work in higher education (Blanton, 1998; Spack 1997). This study focused on adult English Language Learners (ELLs) attending classes on the large urban campus of a community college and explored their attitudes and experiences in the development of confidence and competence in academic writing. Surveys were administered to 30 adult ELLs drawn from a range of college-level curricular courses to identify some of their experiences in the development of academic writing. Eleven adult ELLs, identified by their college professors as successful and competent writers at the level of lower division curricular work, explored through in-depth interviews their experiences in the development of their academic writing. By analyzing the responses of these adult ELL community college students, this study seeks to understand the important and formative experiences in that critical process.

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study. In so doing, it fulfills the essential functions of a literature review in the framing of the study: providing a foundation for building knowledge, showing how the study will advance or refine what is known, providing the context for conceptualizing the study, setting up the methodological approaches, and establishing a frame of reference for interpreting the findings (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

The first section of this literature review focuses on the literature related to the Academic Literacies Model (ALM), which serves as the conceptual framework for the study. The next sections review the literature in the foundational areas related to ALM and the context of the study, including discourse, literacy, and New Literacy Studies; adult English Language Learners; the community college in higher education; composition studies and college composition; and finally, situated cognition and Communities of Practice, the theoretical framework of the study that solidly situates the research in the field of adult education. After the sections related to these foundational areas, the next section will explore the conceptual and empirical literature pertinent to academic discourse and the development of academic literacy. The final section of the literature review will focus on the conceptual and empirical literature most relevant to this study, adult ELLs and academic literacy.

Conceptual Framework

This section presents an overview of the Academic Literacies Model, which serves as the conceptual framework for this study, and provides a context for understanding the literature related to the nature of academic literacy and the dynamics of the development of academic literacy.

The Academic Literacies Model was developed from research and practice in the United Kingdom among predominantly adult students in the university system during the 1990's and early 2000's (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Research on theories, models, pedagogies, and learner strategies in the development of academic discourse is extensive and thoughtful, particularly in the field of composition studies in the U.S. (Lillis & Scott, 2007). However, the research that developed the Academic Literacies model is distinctive in a number of ways, including that it originates in the UK as a consideration of the complexities of theory and practice involved in

writing in curricular courses in higher education. In the UK higher education system, there has historically been no requirement of a composition course or courses at the undergraduate level, and the focus for academic writing is in the context of the academic curriculum. As higher education in the United Kingdom has begun to experience many of the same challenges that the U.S. higher education system has experienced for decades-- increased access and diversity of student populations--the challenges for students in becoming competent in the writing demands of academic study has become increasingly apparent (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Also, because of the way that the UK offers writing support and teaching, the consideration of student writing from UK teacher-researchers is oriented to its place in the content or disciplinary environment rather than in a designated composition or writing course (Lillis & Scott, 2007).

Background and Development of the Academic Literacies Model

In the early 1990's, Mary Lea and Brian Street, two teacher-researchers at the Open University of London and King's College of London, began to explore from a variety of perspectives the nature of academic literacy, particularly writing in an academic environment. In their review of how student writing in higher education had been conceptualized, Lea and Street (1998) noted that two different perspectives had generally formed the basis of most of the discussion.

The first is a skills perspective: that writing in an academic environment is largely a set of behaviors or a generic set of skills in relation to standard English usage, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, organization, and adherence to specific features of academic writing (e.g. essay and paragraph structure). The skills perspective "is based on the assumption that mastery of the correct rules of grammar and syntax, coupled with attention to punctuation and spelling, will ensure student competence in academic writing" (Street, 2009). Once a student has fluency

in these skills, he or she will be able to transfer these skills into a variety of writing situations, including academic writing situations. The foundational philosophical underpinnings of this perspective lie in behaviorism, framing student writing as instrumental in nature (Lea & Street, 1998; Street, 2007). This perspective has pervaded a great deal of the literature in the field of composition studies, particularly the literature related to basic writing. Many have seen this perspective as related to what has been termed the “deficit model” of student writing in academia. In this model, the focus is on the problems in student writing and the limitations of the student; typically, the response to those considerations is to “fix” or remediate those problems or deficiencies (Lea & Street, 1998).

In Lea and Street’s analysis, the second perspective developed to conceptualize student development of academic writing competency built upon and included the skills perspective and then added other elements. They identified it as the socialization approach—a student’s acculturation into the social and intellectual environment of higher education or the Academy. According to this perspective, as a student proceeds through the college experience, he or she develops a level of comfort in the college environment—a knowledge of learning strategies and institutional networks, self-confidence in the social and intellectual environment, awareness of the expected literacy dynamics, and fluency in the requirements of the genres in various disciplines. The underpinnings of this perspective are in social constructivism, and this perspective certainly grounds many of the approaches to working with student writing, including developmental education support services and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs (Lea, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Street, 2007). One limitation inherent in this perspective is that it seems to assume either homogeneity across all the varieties of academic writing and that enculturation into higher education is sufficient to enable a student to apprehend the literacy

practice in a given discipline or that there is such distinctiveness in each discipline that the genres have to be taught individually, as suggested in many WAC programs. Despite these limitations, the socialization model has great strengths in recognizing that a student's social and intellectual connections and relationships in the curricular experience are essential in helping him or her to make meaning in the academic environment.

Academic Literacies Model

In their consideration of both the skills and the socialization perspectives, Lea and Street concluded that they are both valid and necessary elements in a student's development. However, even taken together, they are not sufficient to completely and accurately conceptualize the nature and development of academic literacy. In seeking to understand more thoroughly the nature and dynamic of the development of academic literacy, Lea and Street drew from work done in sociocultural theory, anthropology, situated cognition and communities of practice, composition studies, and New Literacy studies (Gee 1990; Street, 1994, 1995), using a range of tropes that signal the roots of their conceptualization: "apprenticeship," "socialization," "scaffolding/novice/experts" (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Their research and writing led to the development of a model of Academic Literacies that draws heavily on both theory and practice, a model "located at the juncture of theory and application" (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 6).

The Academic Literacies Model is a comprehensive conceptualization of academic literacy, including the skills and socialization models but adding a third perspective, a view of "student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather skill or socialization" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). Reflecting this third perspective, academic literacy is defined as the constellation of "specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and

speaking that characterize college-level communication. These academic literacy practices represent particular views of the world, uses of language, and ways of constructing knowledge within academic disciplines” (Curry, 2004, p. 52). Another way of expressing this understanding is that academic literacy is “fluency in the particular ways of thinking, doing, being, reading and writing which are peculiar to academic contexts” (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 16). This conceptualization foregrounds aspects of academic writing which have previously not been addressed and recognizes the complexity of academic literacy more completely than either the skills or socialization models does alone (Lillis, 2003). Novices in the academic environment must not only master a set of valued practices and skills and become enculturated into the social and intellectual environment, but they must learn to use language to construct knowledge from new academic ideas and experiences, adapting to new ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting, and organizing knowledge (Lea, 1998; Street, 2007).

Broadly, academic literacy includes academic reading, but since writing continues to be at the heart of assessment in higher education and is a high profile academic activity and concern among students and teachers, writing has been the predominant focus in the Academic Literacies Model research and practice (Lea, 2004; Lillis & Scott, 2007). The practices of academic literacy—specifically writing—are the “central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 157). In addition to the processes of developing knowledge and making meaning, “disciplinary knowledge and understanding are largely exhibited and valued through the medium of writing” (Curry & Hewings, 2003, p. 19).

While most other approaches to understanding and teaching academic writing focus on either specific skills or how students can adapt their writing to the style of the Academy, the

Academic Literacies Model is more fundamental as well as more comprehensive in its understanding. It sets up the development of academic literacy as being grounded in a student's ability to negotiate the demands of academic learning as a complex, dynamic, and situated process (Lea, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006). It takes as its starting point "the position that literacy is not a unitary concept; reading and writing—literacies—are cultural and social practices and vary depending upon the particular contexts in which they occur"(Lea, 2004, p.740). Rather than being decontextualized and generic, academic literacies are social practices, embedded in various academic situations and environments (Armstrong, 2010; Baynham, 2000; Jacobs, 2005; Lea & Stierer, 2000; Lea & Street, 1998). As students engage in this way, they recognize that rather than there being a single monolithic competency known as "academic literacy," there are actually multiple literacies or literacy practices as students make meaning in different academic environments, genres, fields, and disciplinary study. They must be able to be able to move confidently between linguistic practices and discourse identities (Lea & Street, 1998; Street, 2006). In actual practice, "the particular notion of what counts in one subgroup, such as a discipline, or what fits the administration's interests or assessment demands, is actually only one literacy amongst many" (Blommaert, Street, & Turner, 2007, p. 140).

Lea and Street's work as practitioner research was originally with adult or non-traditional students in UK higher education (Lea, 1998, 2004), and for that reason, it is grounded in two broad principles in adult education. First, their model builds on the principle that knowledge is constructed through the learner's experience of learning. Consequently, the learner's perception of the learning context and the process of constructing knowledge based on prior experience and the current learning environment seemed to be the pertinent aspects to explore. One of the avenues of research related to this aspect is the metalanguage of writing instruction and teacher

commentary. In particular, many of the experiences of students (particularly non-traditional or adult students) in developing fluency in academic writing are rooted in understanding or misunderstanding of the language (often metaphorical) used by teachers. As they engage in the meaning making in relation to academic writing, they often struggle with drawing from their own experiences to discern what is actually meant by phrases like “tightness of structure” and “clarity of focus,” and there is a great need for increased transparency in the discourse (Lillis & Turner, 2001; Turner, 2002).

Another grounding of ALM in adult education is that its theory and practice is drawn heavily from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), who explored the world of adult learning in situated cognition and communities of practice. They challenged the transmission and assimilation models of learning and posited that students learn when they are able to grasp the practices that they need to master to become full members of a community. Lave and Wenger, working with adult learners, outlined the relationship between identities, different levels of membership, and the importance of discourse in a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lea, 1998).

The ALM conceptualization of multiple literacies as embedded in different academic environments builds on this work by framing the different academic environments as communities of practice (Lea, 1998; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). In this theoretical context, “successful learning takes place when students are able to grasp the practices that they need to master to become full, rather than peripheral, members of the community” (Lea, 1998, p. 157). In essence, developing ways of knowing in the Academy supports the transition from “outsider” to “insider” in the world of academic discourse just as other kinds of learning enable individuals to move from “outsider” to “insider” in other communities of practice (Williams & Garcia,

2005). This theory asserts that there is a close relationship between identity, meaning-making, and discourse in a community of practice, clearly applicable to a college environment as a community of practice (O'Donnell & Tobell, 2007).

Another of the significant populations of consideration in Academic Literacies research is that of linguistic minority communities or non-native speakers of English, whose academic literacy is typically addressed originally in the fields of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), EAP (English for Academic Purposes), and ESL (English as a Second Language). The experiences and needs, as well as personal and cultural backgrounds of these students, vary substantially. For example, immigrant students may have different experiences with academic literacy in their first languages than international students studying in English-speaking countries. Certainly, their development of academic literacy is made much more complex by the increased sites and elements of literacy (Lea & Street, 2006). Regardless, however, these second language (L2) students develop most of their knowledge and competency in academic literacy congruent with the ALM model, through their engagement with different text types and their acquaintance with the range of disciplinary expectations in the various discourses and academic environments, (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann, 2003).

The dynamics of the actual development of academic literacy for students are critical in the research related to ALM, reflecting the primacy of the practice or application elements of the model (Curry, 2004; Curry & Hewings, 2003; Lea, 2004, 2009; Lea & Street, 1997; Lillis & Swan, 2003; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Street, 2009; Wingate & Dreiss, 2009). The ALM understanding of academic literacy emphasizes the need to explore student experience in meaning making in the Academy and the strategies of academic knowledge construction rather than simply identifying what students are doing “wrong” in their writing and finding strategies to

“fix” it (Lea, 1998; McDowell, 2004;). The emphasis that the Academic Literacies Model places on practice and student experience is the basis for much of the research in pedagogy and practice, whether in online environments (Lea, 1998, 2004; Wingate & Dreiss, 2009;), tutoring of basic writers (Curry, Magyar, & Carr, 2003), or writing in disciplinary contexts (Jacobs, 2007; Street, 2009).

The Academic Literacies Model is particularly valuable as a conceptual framework for this study in that it provides a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the nature of academic literacy/academic literacies. The model is grounded in key areas of study that provide a context for understanding academic literacy, it is rooted in theory and practice in adult education, and it will suggest different ways to identify and explore the adult ELL’s experience in the development of academic literacy in community college.

Discourse, Literacy, and New Literacy Studies

In Lea and Street’s development of the Academic Literacies Model, one of the bodies of research they drew from as they worked to define the experience of academic literacy was discourse analysis, literacy scholarship, and the body of work known as New Literacy Studies (Lea & Street, 1998). This broad foundational area of largely conceptual literature provides valuable perspectives on the essential nature of discourse and a discourse community and multiple understandings of what “literacy” means. The work of the scholars in the New Literacy Studies field grounds the Academic Literacies Model in a social and ideological orientation that sees writing as a process of meaning-making and negotiation (Lea & Street, 1998).

Discourse

The term “discourse” is a broad and inclusive umbrella concept, with different meanings, disciplinary applications, intellectual traditions, and professional contexts framing the meanings and implications of the concept very differently. A very basic dictionary definition of

“discourse” could be as simple as “written or spoken communication or debate.” Situating the concept in a more focused way, discourse can be seen as “a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience” (Tyson, 1999, p. 281).

However, in different philosophical bodies of literature, the term “discourse” has specialized understandings. In a post-modern intellectual context, discourse or discourses (since discourses are always multiple) are seen to be inextricably connected with epistemology, power and ideology and intimately embedded in networks of power. Knowledge itself is plural and produced within the context of a specific discourse at point in time (Whisnant, 2009). Foucault theorizes that discourse in general is not a neutral use of language, but it effectively constructs and controls knowledge, relationships, “truth,” institutions, and the dynamics of power (Luke, 1995). Discourse is a formalized way of thinking that can be manifested in language and can shape and create meaning systems. These meaning systems can shape and even dominate how we define and organize our social environment, privileging some discourses and marginalizing others (Luke, 1995).

In the field of Adult Education, the term “discourse” is used to reference “dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values” as well as “topics referred to from the point of view of a particular frame of reference” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). Transformative Learning, as a theoretical perspective in Adult Education, is deeply grounded in a specific understanding of discourse as “dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). In that context, discourse entails a “specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief...a forum in which ‘finding one’s voice’ becomes a prerequisite for free

full participation” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 10-11). There are other highly influential discourses within the field of Adult Education that are shaped by this purposeful and dialogic understanding of the concept of discourse, including racial discourse (Brookfield, 2003), gay discourse (Hill, 1995), discourse of language (Hill, 1990), and the discourse of feminist pedagogy (Tisdell, 1998).

Fundamental to an exploration of academic literacy is an understanding of how the concept of “discourse” is used in this context. In most academic literacy discussions, discourse is framed very simply as “language in its social context” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 37). Identifying some of the implications of this definition, James Paul Gee (1998), a linguistics and literacy scholar and a significant voice in the development of New Literacy Studies, notes discourse as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaning group or “social network” (p. 51). It is, in essence, an “identity kit” that enables a member of a community or group to speak, think, and act in congruence with other members of the community. To participate in a discourse is to adopt ways of “saying-writing-doing-being-valuing-believing” (Delpit, 1993, p. 208). It is this definition of discourse that will undergird the research, analysis, and discussion related to this study.

Gee (1998) notes that any discourse is shaped by five specific factors. First, discourses rest on a set of values and perspectives, and as such, they are inherently “ideological.” Second, discourses are not subject to critique from within the discourse, since once a person undertakes to critique a discourse or a discourse community he/she has stepped outside the discourse. Third, some discourses exist or draw their positions in opposition to other defined discourses, and exist by contrast to them. Fourth, a discourse of necessity will privilege certain viewpoints and values

while marginalizing others. Finally, discourses are closely connected to power and even hierarchy in society, and control over a discourse and comfort with the dominant discourse can empower individuals within the social context.

Literacy

The concept of literacy is related to functioning within a discourse, but it has a wide range of conceptualizations depending on the context and field. Some are very instrumental and concrete, particularly those specifically related to written language and literacy campaigns: the ability to “use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (“Adult ESL Language and Literacy Instruction,” 2000). Typically in this sense of literacy, often associated with community education and Adult Basic Education, the emphasis is on functional reading and writing, and sometimes numeracy. By contrast, in other contexts the term “literacy” is used very broadly to reference a general ability to operate with fluency, knowledge, confidence, critical reflection, and competence within a specific domain, e.g., IT literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, emotional literacy, consumer literacy, financial literacy (McDowell, 2004).

Other understandings of literacy are more closely tied to the concept of discourse or discourses. For example, based on his conceptualization of primary and secondary discourses, Gee (1998) sees the concept of literacy as control of uses of language within a particular discourse. It is a matter of degree, of course, with “mastery” being a full and effortless control of the language of a discourse. He posits that an individual gains mastery in a discourse only “through exposure to models in natural, meaningful, and functional settings” (p. 57). An important point for Gee is that an individual’s primary discourse (primary oral language) is acquired by exposure to models in meaningful and authentic or natural environments, and that

typically he or she controls it at a level of mastery. The control of or literacy in subsequent discourses (other oral languages or written language) becomes mastery only through exposure to models in authentic and meaningful contexts (Gee, 1998). Based on Gee's analysis, the role of a context or community in the development of any type of literacy in a discourse is clearly critical.

In contrast to Gee's relatively broad conception of literacy (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), others define literacy specifically in relation to written language, either as ability to use written language (the more common sense of the word) or, more flexibly, as ways of using written language (Ivanic, 1998). Like Gee, many of those who consider the concept of literacy only in relation to written language recognize the highly contextualized nature of literacy, challenging earlier and more simplistic views of literacy as isolated skills in reading and writing. Recent scholarship sees literacy as solidly embedded in a social context rather than being simply a technical or neutral skill (Ivanic, 1998; Lea, 1998; Street, 2003;). Barton (1994) emphasizes the situatedness of literacy by using the metaphor of the ecology of literacy to emphasize the network of interrelated social factors that support the experience of literacy (Ivanic, 1998).

In her consideration of literacy, Roz Ivanic (1998) critiques Gee's distinction between acquisition and learning in relation to literacy, preferring the terms "developing and extending" literacy. She reasons that

developing and extending literacies is not a simple matter of "learning" or "acquisition." The term "learning" implies that particular activities need to be designed for the purpose of developing and extending literacies, whereas a social view of literacy suggests that literacies are best developed and extended in the context of use. The term 'acquisition'

implies that there is a pre-ordained “thing” to be acquired, and suggests that there can be some end-point by which someone has completed the process of acquisition (p. 69).

In her conception of literacy, there are several fundamental principles related to developing and extending literacy. The first is that the ability to use written language is not a single skill, nor is literacy measurable on a single scale. Literacies are developed and extended by participating in social activities, and entering a new cultural context involves a new phase of literacy. Finally, developing and extending literacies is a constant process of expanding and enriching the repertoire of literacy practices (Ivanic, 1998).

New Literacy Studies

The field of New Literacy Studies, emerging since the middle 1980’s, is rooted in the work of a number of theorists, including Gee, Hamilton, Ivanic, Street, and Barton. It rejects a predominantly cognitive, narrow or skills-oriented view of literacy that focuses simply on the educational and cognitive characteristics of literacy or the very narrow sense of functional reading and writing (Lea, 1998). The field conceives of literacy as a sociocultural practice, focused on the contexts and institutions which frame the use of language, in this case written language; it is, in essence a social practice. Literacy, in this definition, is situated in a specific community or context (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The basic unit of this theory of literacy is the concept of literacy practices, which are “general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). Literacy practices are not based solely on behavior or activity, but they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The term “literacy event” is used to reference specific activities where literacy has a role, “observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8).

New Literacy Studies also recognizes and stipulates multiple literacies, varying according to the situations, purposes, values, content, and cultural setting (Ewing, 2003; Stephens, 2000; Street, 2003, 2005). As explained by Street (2003),

It [literacy] is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge; the ways in people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts” (pp. 77-78).

By extension, in New Literacy Studies, if literacy is a set of practices within a social network or a community, then it follows that literacy must be learned authentically, within that community (Ewing, 2003). It is this understanding of literacy, posited in New Literacy Studies, that underlies the Academic Literacies Model as well as this research study.

Academic Literacy

One of the most important sites of literacy practices is higher education, and recent research has begun to address the complexity and multiplicity of the literacy practices inherent in the academic community. The terms “academic discourse community” and “academic literacy” are increasingly common ways of framing discussions of academic writing, but those phrases are contested and interpreted differently in different bodies of work.

“Academic literacy” is a frequently-used designation in these discussions, but with evolving meanings. In some literature and practice, it has been seen as somewhat decontextualized and generic, defined as “the ability to read and write the various texts assigned in university” (Braine, 2002; Jacobs, 2005; Spack, 1997). Others recognize “academic literacy”

as one type of literacy, a literacy practice in higher education as a way of responding to the demands of curricular work. Yet another way of seeing “academic literacy” is that it is not “literacy” or a single type of literacy but literacies, a “multiplicity of literacy events and of literacy practices” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 68). Seen in this way, literacy events are defined as occasions in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the interactions and interpretative processes, while literacy practices are the patterns and activity around literacy events that link them to the broader cultural and social community or situation (Street, 2003, 2005).

Much of the understanding of literacy in the academic community is rooted in earlier work with academic texts done by Charles Bazerman. Bazerman (1988) sees written academic texts as constructing knowledge in particular subject areas, and for students, the very act of doing academic writing is a process of constructing academic knowledge. According to Bazerman (1988), when a student engages in an academic writing task, he or she is drawing from four different contexts in that event of knowledge construction: the subject or content under study, the literature in the field, the audience, and the writer’s self. Clearly, for Bazerman, the experience of academic writing is a complex literacy practice, and his conceptualization of the epistemological implications of academic writing and academic literacy underlie New Literacy Studies and the Academic Literacies Model.

Some conceptualizations of academic literacy posit a static model of written text appropriate for a college environment. However, newer research in academic literacy recognizes that academic disciplines use different approaches, genres, or literacy practices in a fluid and dynamic way (Lea, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Street, 1996). Academic discourse can be characterized in some general ways by “linguistic, textual, social, and cultural features” of the

Academy, but also “[those] used by...the various academic disciplines” (Ferenz, 2005, p. 340). This more comprehensive understanding of academic literacy sees a multiplicity of academic discourses and academic literacies. It is this latter way of viewing academic literacy that is most congruent with New Literacy Studies and most influential in informing the development of the Academic Literacies Model. Based on this understanding, however, a great challenge exists to identify and make explicit those linguistic, textual, social, and cultural features, but even more to understand a learner’s process and experience in developing and extending those literacies in their authentic contexts.

Adult English Language Learners

One of the most significant demographics in any consideration of the development of even the most fundamental literacy as well as the greater complexity of academic literacy is the increasing population English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States and in higher education, particularly community colleges.

Immigration and Linguistic Diversity

It is a widely expressed truism that the United States is a nation of immigrants dating from the early 17th century, with the nations of origin and the ethnic backgrounds of those immigrants shifting through different periods of history. Early immigrant waves came largely from the British Isles (England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales) and western Europe (Germany, Scandinavia), while subsequent groups in the nineteenth century came from Asia (Japan and China), eastern Europe (Russia, Poland), and in recent years from Latin America, central Europe, Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002).

In the early twenty-first century, immigration to the United States continues to be a strong influence shaping the social and cultural landscape of the nation. The changes in U.S.

demographics over the last thirty years have in part been characterized by a dramatic increase in first-generation immigrants (many of whom have limited English proficiency) and second-generation immigrants (defined as those born in the United States of at least one immigrant parent) whose first language is not English. According to the Current Population Survey from the U.S Census Bureau, in March 2000, 28.4 million foreign-born individuals lived in the U.S., over 10% of the country's population. Another 27.5 million (another 10% of the population) were second-generation immigrants, defined as those born of foreign or mixed foreign and native-born parents (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Added to this number, 1.8 million immigrants are arriving every year (Conway, 2010; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). Of these populations of first- and second-generation immigrants, which include refugees, migrant workers, permanent residents, international students, and naturalized citizens, almost half are adults between the ages of 25 and 44 years old (Curry, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

The first-generation and second-generation adult immigrant population is an extremely diverse group, bringing great cultural richness to the country and the institutions they are engaged with, but that diversity can also present a range of challenges for all who are involved in the dynamic of this diversity. These individuals bring a wide range of linguistic, religious, cultural, and racial backgrounds; they also come from a wide variety of skills, educational traditions, professions, and accomplishments. Linguistic diversity is one of the primary challenges that immigrants face, and that diversity is deeply rooted in all of the other aspects of diversity that characterize the immigrant population. Language-related challenges are particularly significant for immigrants in terms of their functional success in day-to-day life, the workforce, and education. Certainly some immigrants are from English-speaking countries, and many others come from environments where they studied English quite extensively. However,

based on the 2000 U.S. census, more than 35 million adults are non-native speakers of English (almost 15% of the U.S. population), and of these, 9 million do not speak English at all (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003; Conway, 2010). It is estimated that 70% of new immigrants as well as a large number of second-generation immigrants in the U.S. have limited English proficiency, over 23 million in 2005 (Conway, 2010; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), of U.S. adults whose primary or “home” language is not English, 60% speak Spanish, and the second most prevalent language is Chinese. The other most frequently cited first languages are French, German, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, and Polish (“Adult English Language Learner Profiles,” 2009).

Certainly it is understood that linguistic diversity greatly enriches any society, and there is an increasing sense in the U.S. that preserving an immigrant’s cultural and linguistic identity is a priority for both the immigrant and the society in general. The shifting emphasis from assimilation to maintenance of cultural identity has led to a number of debates in the country, including the appropriateness of “English-only” municipal, social, and commercial services as contrasted with movements advocating more open linguistic access within society. However, given a population so linguistically diverse, in most views, the need for individuals to learn English is both a short-term and long-term significant priority (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). It is no surprise that limited English skills are associated with low-wage jobs, as well as significant difficulties navigating daily life, underscoring the importance for communities, families, and individuals to make English language learning a very important societal and personal initiative (“Adult English Language Learner Profiles, 2009).

As noted by the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, learning to speak, read, and write in the English language is the most important integration challenge that faces the 1.8 million immigrants who now arrive in the United States each year. English is truly the language of opportunity for today's immigrants: it opens the door to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and allows immigrants to communicate with their neighbors, their children's teachers, health care providers, landlords, and others with whom they must interact on a regular basis. English skills are also crucial to passing the U.S. citizenship exam, which serves as a gateway to full participation in the life of one's community, including the ability to vote in local, state, and federal elections. Given immigrants' growing share of our nation's citizens, workers, and families, promoting their acquisition of English is arguably the most important integration challenge—and opportunity—facing our city, state, and federal governments (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007, p. 3).

Educational Needs and English Acquisition

The consideration of the educational needs of adult first- and second-generation immigrants with low English proficiency is a growing body of research and discussion. In terms of English acquisition, there are generally considered to be two avenues for English as a Second Language (ESL) education for adults. The first is through federally funded as well as community-based adult education programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 45% of the adult learners enrolled in federally funded adult education programs (1.2 million learners) are enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, not to mention the many others enrolled in community-based or Adult Basic Education programs to study English (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). This group is the largest and fastest growing

segment of learners in adult education programs (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). This group is also significantly under-served. In the 2000 U.S. census, 21 million adults reported speaking English “not at all” or “not well”; by 2003, in the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2005 American Community Survey, 23 million identified as low English proficient. This number far exceeds the capacity of adult education ESL programs (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). A 2001 study done in New York City by the New York Immigration Coalition estimated that only 5% of the need for English classes was being met (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). For the most part these programs are nonacademic and focus on functional or work-related basics in English literacy—speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; Rance-Roney, 1995). Typically the outcomes associated with these programs include the ability to function in the workplace and interact with the community institutions such as health care, public schools, stores, law enforcement.

One of the other frequently cited purposes for the participation of these students in federally funded or community-based adult education ESL courses is their interest in pursuing higher education in the U.S. As noted in Mathews-Aydinli (2008), there are a number of concerns related to this avenue of English language preparation, both in terms of the data that suggest the academically-oriented needs of these learners are not being addressed in these programs as well as the relative paucity of research in such a vital and fundamental function of adult education programs.

The other avenue for adults seeking to learn English is non-credit or credit-bearing ESL programs associated with higher education, typically community colleges (Conway, 2010). This more academic avenue of ESL training for adults has the subject of much research (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008), with focuses on the cognitive, linguistic, social, and psychological implications

for this teaching-learning dynamic and the preparation of these learners for continued academic study (Conway, 2010; Curry, 2003; Estrada, Dupoux, & Wolman, 2005; Kaspar, 2000; Spack, 1997; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Zamel, 1995).

English Language Learners and Higher Education

Regardless of which avenue of ESL training that an individual participates in, one of the very significant goals for many learners is the preparation for higher education and academic study. At every level in the U.S. society, it is clear that there is a strong correlation between higher education or post-secondary training (for which adequate English is necessary) and economic stability. In the early years of the nation, it was possible for an immigrant to enter the workforce productively with very minimal education or training or even English fluency, but in today's society that is more and more difficult because of the increasing demand for specific skills and educational preparation in a wide range of jobs (Conway, 2010; Curry, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). Increasingly first- and second-generation immigrants, particularly the adults, recognize the need to pursue education for a more stable and productive future—the American Dream. “For many immigrants, the United States is a place where, through hard work and perseverance, they hope to achieve better lives for themselves and their families. But in today's America, realizing the American Dream is almost impossible without some postsecondary education” (Connell, 2008, p. 6).

For most immigrants, particularly the adults, the community college is the best—or perhaps the only—option for pursuing postsecondary education. Community colleges enroll 6.5 million students, including almost half of all undergraduates in the U.S. Twenty-four percent of these 6.5 million students come from an immigrant background (Connell, 2008). Because of community colleges' open admissions policies, their low cost, their convenience and

accessibility, their range of academic and career programs, and their array of educational preparation courses (including ESL and basic education), community colleges are by far the primary entry point into higher education for immigrants and other second-language learners, especially adults (Conway, 2010; Curry, 2004; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Community colleges have long been seen as “the obvious staging grounds for trying to close many of the gaps in American life...They can close the gap between the immigrant promise and the immigrant experience....” (Connell, 2008, p. 5). The backgrounds as well as the occupational and educational goals of first- and second-generation immigrants are extraordinarily diverse, making the role of the community college even more critical (Curry, 2004).

One of the most pressing needs faced by ELL students as they pursue higher education is their proficiency in English, the predominant language of higher education in the U.S. When an immigrant with limited English proficiency enters community college, the first and arguably the most important challenge is development of functional and academic English (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2000). In most community colleges, all students are admitted, but placement testing determines the need for ESL classwork, basic writing, or other basic education courses before the student moves into college-level disciplinary study (Curry, 2004). Most of the research associated with this community college student demographic is done in the context of ESL/EAP pedagogy and basic writing, though some retention studies undertaken by community college research addresses some of the unique ELL student concerns (Brilliant, 2000; Connell, 2008; Conway, 2010; Ellis, 1995).

There are a variety of terms and acronyms used to designate the teaching and learning of English in higher education contexts both nationally and internationally. One major distinction is dependent on the site of the teaching and learning. If the site is a country where English is

considered a foreign language, then the instruction is designated as EFL or “English as a Foreign Language” and TEFL “Teaching English as a Foreign Language.” If the environment for teaching and learning English is a country where English is the primary or official language, there is a wider range of designations. In some countries, including the U.S., the instruction is usually referenced as ESL or “English as a Second Language,” while in others the designation is ESOL or “English for Speakers of Other Languages,” with TESOL referencing “Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages.” A more specific teaching and learning approach, used most frequently in the UK, is known as ESP or “English for Specific Purposes,” developed in the 1960’s identifying a curriculum in higher education to specifically focus the dynamic of teaching and learning English for the demands of the business, technical fields, or the postsecondary environment. A specific subfield of that curricular approach is designated as EAP or “English for Academic Purposes” (Benesch, 2007).

Referencing the individuals enrolled in these curricula, the term LEP or “Limited English Proficiency” was coined in 1975 following a Supreme Court decision. Later, however, the term ELL or “English Language Learner,” created by Charlene Rivera of the Center for Equity and Excellence in Education, has been used by the U.S. government and educational systems to reference learners in positive rather than negative ways, referencing “a national-origin-minority student who is limited English proficient” (“Part IV: Glossary,” par. 6).

Demographically, ELLs are the most rapidly increasing population in the U.S., and certainly in community colleges (Curry, 2004). Nationally, one in four community college students is an immigrant, many of them ELLs (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). It is almost impossible to characterize a typical ELL college student because of the wide variation in their social, economic, and educational backgrounds. Some ELL college students (typically

traditional-aged college students) are members of a recently defined group, Generation 1.5. The designation was coined in 1988 by Ruben Rumbaut and Kenji Ima to describe L2 (second language) students who arrived in the U.S. as children and completed their secondary educations here but are still limited enough in their English proficiency to require additional work in English language learning (di Gennaro, 2008). Of the adult ELLs in community college, some are second-generation immigrants or naturalized citizens whose English is limited enough to place them through admissions testing into ESL courses. Others of the adult ELLs are immigrants, both documented and undocumented, as well as F1 visa students (often designated as international students).

The group of adult ELLs in college is extraordinarily diverse. It is often perceived that there is a bimodal pattern of adult immigrant students in terms of their educational backgrounds: relatively low educational attainment or literacy in the primary language at one end and very high educational and professional attainment at the other, including international students on F1 visas, highly skilled professionals and those with graduate degrees in their home country or home language—nurses, engineers, teachers. (Curry, 2004). Interestingly, even those with high educational attainments in their cultures of origin will typically find themselves in a developmental or basic skills curriculum when they enter college in the U.S. either because their limited language proficiency influences their ability to do well on placement tests or because they place into ESL and most ESL curricula transition students into developmental reading and writing courses before they move into college-level coursework (Conway, 2010).

One way of seeing the diversity among adult ELL college students is a closer consideration of their literacy or experience in educational environments in their cultures of origin. Some are designated as “pre-literate learners,” that is, coming from cultural and

linguistic backgrounds where written language is uncommon in everyday life. Others may be referenced as “non-literate learners,” that is, coming from cultural and linguistic backgrounds where written language and literacy is available, but they have not had access to it, often due to socioeconomic limitations. Still others are designated as semi-literate, that is coming from a cultural and linguistic background where they had access to and developed some level of literacy in their native language but not a high level—often due to socioeconomic situations. There are many other variations of a learner’s literacy in his/her native language, including learners who are literate in their native languages but in a logographic or other non-Roman alphabet (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003). Finally, some learners are highly literate in their native languages, often having had experiences in advanced academic environments or higher education in the first language (L1) and perhaps even some academic work in English in their culture of origin. One of the implications of this pattern is that some of the ELL students with previous higher education experience will bring what Bourdieu (1989) calls “cultural capital” from educational settings, that is, a comfort level with the practices and expectations of an academic environment (Brammer, 2002; Curry, 2004). Even for English-speaking adult immigrants entering higher education here, there is a great transition to be made regarding cultural assumptions and a different set of expectations of teaching and learning (Alfred, 2003). For adult ELL students, the endeavor of higher education is yet more challenging, requiring not only the development of fluency (oral, aural, reading, and writing) in a new language but of fluency in the academic culture of the U.S. higher education system as well as multiple new academic literacies, the specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking in the disciplines (Curry, 2004).

The Community College in Higher Education

Another area of consideration relevant to the development of academic literacy in adult ELLs in community college is the role of the community college in higher education, its distinctive mission, and the specific characteristics of its students.

Development of Community Colleges

Contemporary community colleges, public higher education institutions, have their roots in the Morrill Act (1862) which granted land in states to establish public universities, expanding the vision of higher education as accessible to a much wider range of people (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005; Ricketts, 2009). The first institution recognized as a community college, Joliet Junior College, was established in 1901 to address a dual role: to offer a level of higher education for students who did not need or perhaps qualify for a full baccalaureate program as well as to provide students with an accessible foundational education prior to pursuing a full baccalaureate degree (Ricketts, 2009).

Two developments in the middle of the twentieth century significantly affected the developing role of the community college. The first was the 1944 passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (the G.I. Bill), providing financial assistance for returning military personnel after World War II. This act removed traditional social and economic barriers to higher education and opened the door to a huge influx of new and often under-prepared students (Ricketts, 2009). The second development was in 1946, when President Truman convened a Commission on Higher Education, which strongly advocated for equality of educational opportunity for all who desired higher education, irrespective of race, religion, or socio-economic limitations. The Commission urged the increased development of two-year colleges (Ricketts, 2009).

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the U.S. saw a dramatic expansion of higher education opportunities with the widespread development of community college, expanding more rapidly than any other segment of higher education (Stephens, 2001). These institutions, identified variously as junior colleges or community colleges, offered college education without barriers. They were geographically accessible and local, open admissions, and low cost, offering a wide range of career and workforce training as well as programs in traditional liberal arts areas (Ricketts, 2009). While these two broad areas of curricular work in community colleges reflects the early dual role set for Joliet Junior College, over the years there have been shifts in how the role and mission of community colleges have been defined, from a focus on career and vocational training to specialized or high-tech training to comprehensive programming with the intent of providing avenues for transfer (West, 2010).

Distinctive Role and Mission of Community Colleges

One of the distinctive features of community colleges as higher education institutions is their breadth and comprehensiveness: career and vocational programs (even diploma and certificate programs to provide entry into the workforce), specialized high-tech programs, pre-professional and professional programs (particularly in the high demand health careers), and the first two years of traditional academic programs and liberal arts curricula (Franco, 2002; West, 2010). In addition, because of the institutions' mission of accessibility and open admissions, community colleges are deeply invested in offering extensive basic or developmental education courses in English (reading and writing) and mathematics. They are also the primary higher education institutions that offer academic (for credit) ESL classes for ELLs (West, 2010).

Because of the comprehensiveness, accessibility, and flexibility of education available in community colleges, they have become the largest sector of higher education, and they have an

extremely diverse student population with a wide range of educational needs (Spellman, 2007). They are often characterized as the “workhorses” of higher education, addressing a wide range of needs:

helping student catch up through developmental, or remedial, classes; preparing students to transfer to four-year institutions; providing specialized workforce and job skills training; and teaching English as a second language. They also reach a disproportionate share of nontraditional college students—single parent, low-income, minority, immigrant, part-time, first-generation, and adult (Badolato, 2010).

Additionally, they re-train displaced workers, train workers in “green jobs” and “green technologies.” It is estimated that 80% of law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians are trained at community colleges, and almost 60% of new nurses and other health-care workers are trained at community colleges (Badolato, 2010).

Community colleges have an increasingly significant role in the U.S. landscape of higher education. According to the American Associate of Community Colleges (2011), there are 1167 community colleges in the United States, enrolling a total of 12.5 million students. This figure includes 7.4 million credit-seeking students; this is 44% of all undergraduates in higher education and 43% of all incoming freshmen (“2011 Community College Fast Facts”). There are an additional 5 million who enroll for specific career training or enrichment, without the anticipation of receiving a degree (“2011 Community College Fast Facts,” 2011; Badolato, 2010).

In addition to number of community colleges and the number of students enrolled, a significant feature of community colleges is their role in the education of specific populations of students. Of community college students, 58% are women, with 42% being men (“2011

Community College Fast Facts”). Compared to those in other types of higher education, community college students include a disproportionate share of students often defined as “non-traditional” and often “high-risk”—first-generation students, adult students, minorities, low-income, non-native speakers of English, immigrants (first- or second-generation), returning students after years in the workforce or away from education, part-time students (less than 12 credits per semester), full-time workers, students who are self-supporting financially, students supporting families, single parents, and students who come with a GED rather than a high school diploma (Spellman, 2007).

Particularly relevant to this study, depending on the dates and sources of the data, 44 to 47% of students enrolled in community colleges are adults (25 years of age or older), 42 to 45% are first-generation students, 45% are minorities, and 15% are ELLS or non-native speakers of English (“2011 Community College Fast Facts,” Spellman, 2007). Not only are many of these students from traditionally under-served populations, but many face significant challenges that the institutions must be prepared to help them address, including financial aid, academic planning and advisement, basic or developmental coursework, ESL classes, flexibility of scheduling (including online courses), and a wide variety of curricula to address educational and workforce needs.

Challenges Facing Community Colleges to Support Student Success

One of the significant dilemmas faced by community colleges in the early 21st century is supporting student success and addressing student retention-persistence (Adam, 2009; Guess, 2008; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Nealy, 2008; Schuetz, 2005; Spellman, 2007; Summers, 2003). Certainly, there is a concern about completion of baccalaureate degrees, since, according to a report by the Center for American Progress, in the past 15 years, American has fallen from third

to tenth among developing countries for 25- to 35-year-olds in college degree completion. Only 60% of those who start college, finish with a baccalaureate. In relation to community colleges, only 25% of those who start in community college actually finish with a degree (Adam, 2009).

Of greater concern for community colleges is the number of students who struggle all the way through the experience. For example, 14% of students who begin studies do not complete a single credit in their first semester; at least 25% do not return for the second semester, and 50% do not return for the second academic year (McClenney, 2009; Nealy, 2008). The fact that less than 30% of students earn an associate degree after three years is very understandable, given the fact that most community college students attend only part-time. Also, students who anticipate transferring to a four-year school often transfer before completing the associate degree (McClenney, 2009). The number of part-time students is also related to the percentage of community college students (15 to 20%) who anticipate a baccalaureate degree and actually complete it within six years (Hassel & Giordano, 2009).

Certainly, there are a number of factors that contribute to these statistics, including the number of part-time students who may take only one or two courses a semester and may have to stop out for one or more semesters due to family or financial issues. It is not surprising that those who drop out are disproportionately at risk students--students of color, low-income students, or academically under-prepared students who take basic or developmental courses (Adam, 2009; Nealy, 2008). Data from the national "Achieving the Dream" project indicated that 69% of students who place into basic or developmental math never complete the sequence; 56% of students who place into basic or developmental English never finish the sequence and enroll in college-level courses (McClenney, 2009). While these patterns may be understandable, the challenges remain for the community colleges to consider why some students succeed and

others do not, and what practices at the institutional level or in the classroom could significantly impact student success. Among the factors that have emerged as possible areas for community colleges to address include more consistent advisement models, first-year experiences or orientations, better access to financial aid, and more flexibility in course offerings, including online courses in addition to pedagogical supports to facilitate student achievement (Adam, 2009; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Nealy, 2008; Schuetz, 2005; Summers, 2003).

Composition Studies and College Composition

Any consideration of the development of academic literacy among a population of community college students must inevitably be informed by work in the field of composition studies, the changing perceptions of the nature of composition in higher education, and the evolution of how writing has been taught at the post-secondary level.

Early Development of Composition Studies

Interestingly, most of the threads of scholarship and discourse in the field of composition studies in the 21st century have their roots in the origins of what we think of as western classical rhetoric from the fifth century B.C.E. in Greece. The basic questions and some of the approaches of the classical discipline have been influential in the shaping of writing instruction in the U. S. even through today (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004). Although the formal study of rhetoric in classical Greece was largely oriented to public speaking rather than writing instruction, two particular aspects from that world have set up 2500 years of discourse. The classical model of the process of composing a speech has evolved into the basis for the contemporary models of writing processes. Also, the ancient Greek concern about the social function or purpose of rhetoric has contributed to our contemporary interest in the social function of writing, the impact of purposeful writing on the writing experience, and understanding of

academic literacy as a social practice embedded in the academic community (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004).

The epistemological assumptions underlying classical rhetoric persisted into the medieval period and the “trivium” of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Those intellectual traditions fundamentally assumed that knowledge exists, and that an individual discovers it and uses rhetorical tools to express it and give it form (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004). Through the Renaissance, scholars continued to think of rhetoric as the “dress of thought” rather than the study or development of thought and the construction of knowledge. It was the finishing refinement of an upper-class education (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004, p. 3).

A significant development in the understanding of rhetoric and the pedagogy of writing in the modern world came from the early 19th century in the United States when Edward Channing held the chair of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University and was succeeded by Francis Child. Under their leadership, the orientation was shifted from speaking to writing as the central focus of study, with attention to a formal list of literature as rhetorical models and prescriptive expectations for organization and grammar. The term “composition,” defined as “the conscious and explicit development of students’ writing in formal education,” began to be used to designate the broad field that was largely focused on pedagogy and the learning/teaching dynamic in relation to writing (Russell, 2006).

Throughout the 19th century, this model of college composition and first-year instruction in composition spread to other colleges because of Harvard’s prestige, and it influenced the preparation of students who wanted to attend college. This emphasis on literary models, clearly delineated rhetorical modes, and grammatical correctness is even today an element of any discussion in the tradition of the first-year college English composition experience, if only

because it represents the traditional model, the basis for the “current-traditional” model of freshman composition (Connors, 1997; Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004). It was in this period that this basic model in modern composition was shaped with the emphasis on the “product,” including the four modes of discourse (narration, description, exposition, and argument), the methods of exposition (process analysis, definition, comparison/contrast, classification), the levels of discourse (word, sentence, paragraph), the invention process, a strong emphasis on usage and style, the conception of the organic paragraph, a focus on the personal essay and the research paper, and the ideals of unity, coherence, and emphasis (Connors, 1997).

The early 20th century brought two developments in the field of composition studies, both of which had significant impacts on the teaching and learning dynamic in college composition. The first was the establishment of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911 as a formalized resistance to the highly prescriptive model of freshman English shaped by the Harvard model. The NCTE advocated for a model of writing that emphasized self-expression and a renewed interest in the classical idea of writing with a recognition of its purposes and social function (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004). Related to this shift in emphasis was the rise of the Progressive movement in education, which saw education as an experience that was grounded not in a prescribed literary canon but in the experience of students, with a focus on students’ personal growth and their development into productive citizens in a democracy. These were extremely powerful currents of thought which began to shape the perception of writing in education, although their impact on actual teaching and learning in the college writing classroom wasn’t realized until somewhat later (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004).

In the post-World War II era, the Progressive philosophical threads merged with other shifts in thought to begin more a fundamental change in the shape of college composition. There began to be more clear distinctions between literary study and writing programs within English departments, and composition studies began to be established as its own discipline and field of study, with its own body of research and journals (Connors, 1997). The NCTE created the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949 with its associated journal, *College Composition and Communication*, and later began publication of *Research in the Teaching of English* (1967) another outlet for research in the field. Within the next two decades, a number of other publications were created to address the variety of research- and teaching-related avenues of inquiry in the field: *The Journal of Basic Writing* (1975), *The Journal of Teaching Writing* (1981), *Written Communication* (1984), and *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (1984) among others. The research and thought supported in these academic publications has been the dominant factor in shaping the direction of writing instruction in higher education for the last forty years. Any study of student development of writing in a higher education context must inevitably be informed by the currents of thought articulated in the community of composition studies theory and practice.

Parallel to these developments within the English composition community was a movement within education scholarship based on the work of Jerome Bruner, which posited that education should teach students “the processes of discovering how and why things were as they were” (Glenn, Goldthwaite, & Connors, 2003). Bruner’s work provided an additional impetus to study the nature and various models of the writing process, and Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow were voices in the development of a pedagogy that supported the development of a student’s “authentic voice” (Macrorie, 1970; Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, 2004).

The commitment of composition scholars to a strong and dialogic relationship between theory and practice in the pedagogy of writing was clearly demonstrated in the 1970's as the interest in the writing process combined with an interest in the implications of research in cognitive psychology on the nature of writing. The field of composition studies began to look at other disciplines for theories and methods of investigating writing (Smagorinsky, 2006). Janet Emig was a theorist who explored the nature of the composing process in terms of what goes on cognitively for the writer, partially articulated in *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* (1971). While the early models of structured invention strategies were useful as tools for writers, research by Linda Flower and cognitive psychologist John Hayes outlined the nature of the composing process as being more recursive and hierarchical than linear (Dean, 2008; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004).

Basic Writing

An even more significant development in composition studies, basic writing, emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's as the demographic of college freshman writers began to change. With the growth in the community college movement, with its open-admissions and open access mission, more and more entering freshman English students were perceived to be "under-prepared," either linguistically because their home language was not English or Standard English or because their cultural and personal backgrounds were not oriented to college preparation. In 1977, one of the seminal works addressing the nature and needs of under-prepared students was Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, which led to the development of an area of teaching and learning research within composition studies known most frequently as "developmental writing" or "basic writing" (Adner-Klassner & Glau, 2005). Students identified as "basic writers" at that time and even today represent a diverse and shifting

population: students of color, international students and other non-native speakers of English, immigrants or refugees, re-entry students (e.g., displaced workers or displaced homemakers), adult students, students who have had erratic or interrupted secondary educations, students who have come from problematic secondary education experiences, and GED graduates.

Much of the scholarship in the field of basic writing over the years has been grounded in pedagogy and the teaching-learning dynamic, including some fundamental questions such as whether there is actually a set of shared characteristics or attributes in the group identified as “basic writers,” what the “line” is between basic and college-level writers, or whether the designation of basic writers is a social construct based on a deficit model that serves to marginalize students and create more of a barrier than a help to the development of academic competencies (Adner-Kassner & Glau, 2005; Blau, 2006; Stanley, 2010). One perspective was articulated by Andrea Lunsford when she argued that basic writers have not attained the level of cognitive development that would allow them to form abstractions and suggested active workshop pedagogies to stimulate abstract thought in basic writers (Lunsford, 1979). However, in the 1980’s, Mike Rose challenged what many had articulated as a “deficit” model of basic writers, suggesting that a purely cognitive lens for understanding basic writers is overly rational and seriously limited in its omission of consideration of social and cultural factors. He argued for a social constructivist perspective that identified basic writers as being shaped by sociopolitical realities like race, gender, and class much more than by cognitive attributes (Rose, 1988).

Another thread of discussion that has informed scholarship in the field of basic writing within composition studies is the nature of the basic writing discourse communities and the broader academic discourse community. A very influential voice in this discussion has been

David Bartholomae, who extended Mina Shaughnessy's work with student texts. In "Inventing the University," he focused on student texts to explore ways in which students adapted discourse conventions in academic settings (Bartholomae, 1985, 1987, 1993).

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

Another area of discussion and research in composition studies from the late 1970s through the 1990s was an increased interest in the teaching and learning in college-level composition courses, particularly in light of the need to help students develop competency in college-level writing within the academic disciplines. One particular movement emerged to address these concerns directly--the "writing across the curriculum" (WAC) model, in which cross-disciplinary programs were created to help develop mature composing processes and educate students and faculty from all disciplines about writing pedagogy and the different genres in academic discourse in the various college curricula (Fulwiler, 1986; Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004; Spack, 1988; Zamel, 2000).

"The Social Turn"—The Sociocultural Lens in Composition Studies

Another very significant dialogue within composition studies that had its origins in the 1980s and 1990s was the focus on the social nature of the writing experience, with more emphasis on consideration of students' social and cultural environments and primary discourse communities—often referenced as "the social turn" in composition studies (Welch, 2004). Operating from social constructivist and critical theory perspectives, this theoretical and pedagogical approach regards language and writing as creating knowledge rather than simply expressing or communicating knowledge. It also posits the importance of helping the student understand social dynamics as they impact his or her identity and educational experience as well as to recognize the emancipatory potential in education (Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004).

By the end of the 1980s, moving into the 1990s there was a much more pervasive awareness of equity and social justice issues in higher education and in the experience of students, as well as the degree to which gender, race, and social class affected the situation of writers, particularly basic writers, and marginalized them. Seeing writing in social and cultural contexts gradually became a major orientation of the field of composition studies (Canagarajah, 1997; Prendergast, 1998; Reynolds, Bizzell, & Herzberg, 2004; Rose, 1985, 1988, 1989; Welch, 2004).

Contemporary Developments in Composition Studies

The last twenty-five years of composition studies have been characterized by the influence of all of the theoretical strands that have informed the earlier development of the field: cognitive psychology, traditional rhetorical models, social constructivist theory, writer-centered or expressivist writing approaches, and the more recent voice of critical theory as a lens in writing instruction. This period has also been characterized by an expansion of the field of composition studies from being mostly pedagogical to being inclusive of issues of literacy and writing from historical, rhetorical, philosophical, sociocultural, and political perspectives (Durst, 2006). While it has not been easy for scholars in composition studies to analyze or classify the theoretical “camps” or models in composition studies, several avenues emerge over and over in surveys of the contemporary landscape in composition studies (Durst, 2006; Fulkerson, 2005). As noted in all analyses of the current environment of composition studies, the theoretical and pedagogical discourse in the field of composition studies in the twenty-first century is certainly not monolithic. As argued by Fulkerson (2005), composition studies has become a less unified and more eclectic discipline in recent years. He notes that in earlier years, there was axiological consensus (agreement on the fundamental directions of composition programs and research) with pedagogical diversity (a range of pedagogical strategies to support teaching and learning in the

classroom)—agreement on “ends but not means” (Fulkerson, 2005, p. 655). Today, he says, there is neither axiological nor pedagogical consensus.

In the current climate of composition studies, Fulkerson posits three very different axiological currents or sets of formative values: a social or social constructivist current which values critical cultural analysis, an expressive current, and a multifaceted rhetorical current (Fulkerson, 2005). Each of these currents has a different set of responses to the four broad questions that drive an understanding of a compositional landscape:

- What makes writing “good”? (an axiological or value-laden definition);
- How do written texts come into being? (a process question);
- How does one most effectively teach college students, when procedural rather than propositional knowledge is the goal (a pedagogical question); and
- How do we know? (the central epistemological question) (Fulkerson, 2005, p. 655).

The paired approaches of critical theory and cultural studies as a basis for writing instruction form one of the broad avenues in the contemporary composition studies world identified by Fulkerson and reflect the “social turn” (shift in focus to the social and cultural environment of the writer) in composition studies. Critical theory reflects the literacy work of Paulo Freire and features pedagogy and instructional activities with an explicitly liberatory agenda, challenging students to recognize and confront social inequity in relation to race, class, and gender; marginalizing discourses; various types of power institutions (Fulkerson, 2005). Certainly this approach has the deep commitment of a many researchers and practitioners in aspects of composition studies ranging from the way that readings and literary analysis are situated (Green, 2003; Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; Kurtyka, 2010; Welch, 2011).

The second broad strand of approaches in composition studies is identified by Fulkerson (2005) as expressivist, placing the writer, the writer's personal growth and self-awareness, and the development of the writer's voice at the center of writing instruction. As noted in Tate, Rupiper, and Schick (2001), "expressivism places the writer at the center...with [his/her] imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development....expressivist pedagogy employs freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and....dialogic collaborative response....Expressivist pedagogy encourages a sense of writer presence and 'voice'..." (p. 19).

The third broad area in contemporary composition studies as signaled by Fulkerson (2005) is the one typically identified as the dominant tradition in composition studies and composition pedagogy—alternately called current traditional or procedural rhetoric. It is this approach that is the basis of the standards for a first-year-writing course developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (1999). The standards fall under four headings: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, processes, and knowledge of conventions (Fulkerson, 2005).

The varied theoretical approaches and practices that inform how college writing is understood and taught are critical in understanding how academic literacy is framed at the college level. Each offers significant insights into how students negotiate the expectations and development of writing in the academic community.

Situated Cognition and Communities of Practice

In addition to the literature related to discourse and literacy as well as the literature in composition studies, one of the foundational areas of research that grounds the Academic Literacies Model is in situated cognition and communities of practice. This learning theory and theoretical model is explicitly cited by Lea and Street as well as well other researchers in the

ALM body of work, and it solidly positions the ALM and this study in the field of Adult Education. The Academic Literacies Model is built upon an understanding of literacy as a constellation of social practices situated in specific times, places, and cultural contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Lea, 1998). In fact, an increasingly prominent theme in the research and practice related to academic literacy for college students recognizes that knowledge is not transmitted but constructed through students' interactions with academic learning contexts, often referencing Lave and Wenger's work in situated cognition and communities of practice (Alfred, 2003; Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Cope, 2005; Hirst, Henderson, Allan, Bode, & Kocatepe, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Lea, 1998; Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 2007; Macbeth, 2006; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007).

Situated Cognition

Situated cognition is a learning theory that is built on the assumption that the learning experience is fundamentally grounded in the context—the community, the tools, and the activities inherent in the specific situation (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). It traces its roots to constructivism, whose main principle articulates the shifting of the orientation and control of the learning experience from teachers to learners (Johnson, 2001). It also draws from Vygotsky's sociocultural and social learning theories, which contend that the individual's development and learning process cannot be understood without reference to the social environment in which the individual is situated (Cope, 2005). Lea (1998) noted in her early work outlining the ALM that “knowledge is constructed through the learner's experience of learning” (p. 57), and as the learner engages with the elements of the context, he or she makes meaning and constructs knowledge. Not only is learning is contextual, but it must be grounded in the authentic activity and communication of a particular environment. In that sense,

participation in the activity of the environment is imperative in the meaning-making experience. Epistemologically, situated cognition assumes that learners are individual interpreters of meaning, but the context or participation in the cultural practice in which the knowledge exists is essential in the individual's construction of knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). In this context, the term "authentic" is used to reference contextualized experiences--real-life environments in the practice—characterized by the necessity to problem solve and work with complex processes and goals (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Inherent in this theory are four premises: humans are social beings; knowledge is a matter of competence in relation to specific activities; knowing is a function of active engagement with the world and pertinent activities; and learning ultimately produces meaning (Wenger, 1998a). The most obvious and frequently cited examples of situated learning include the development of authentic competencies through the traditional model of apprenticeships—whether in the trades, the arts, language development, health careers, or various roles in business.

Cognitive Apprenticeship

The application of situated cognition theory to the academic realm, including K-12, is explored by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989). They argue that knowledge is inherently situated, a product of "the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed" (p. 32). Language and concepts, like tools, have meaning and are developed only within the environment and community that uses them. Each community of practitioners (including members of academic disciplines) is connected by tasks and activities but also by intricate, socially constructed beliefs that are essential to their identity as a community as well as culture, concepts, and discourse. As learners seek to participate in such a community, Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) argue for an approach they reference as a cognitive apprenticeship, that embeds "learning

in activity and make[s] deliberate use of the social and physical context” (p. 32). A cognitive apprenticeship, like the centuries-old model of the craft apprenticeship, seeks to “enculturate students into authentic practices through activity and social interaction” (p. 37). Critical elements of a cognitive apprenticeship include an authentic domain of practice and situated modeling or coaching in which more skilled or expert practitioners make explicit their tacit knowledge and strategies. After this, the expert practitioners support learners’ efforts in the activity and then empower the learners to continue independently as they become increasingly competent in the authentic activities (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989).

Communities of Practice

The theory of situated cognition and the example of apprenticeship undergird the work of Lave and Wenger in their model of Communities of Practice. Lave and Wenger’s model is concerned specifically with adult learning, challenging the transmission and assimilation model of learning in which existing knowledge is transmitted from teacher to learner, and the learner individually acquires knowledge based on that transmission (Jawitz, 2007). They began to develop their model while studying apprenticeship as a learning model and realized that rather than being simply a relationship between a student and a master, apprenticeship is part of a more complex set of relationships. There is a deeply engaged community of practitioners at different levels of mastery that acts as “a living curriculum” for the novice apprentice (Wenger, 2006, sec. 3). Rather than focusing on learning as something that only goes on within the individual learner, they identify learning as a process that develop *in situ*, from participation in specific social environments and activities, including experiencing the values, norms, and true culture of the environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They expand the concept of apprenticeship as a compelling learning process moving past the traditional connotations of the “concept of

apprenticeship—from a master/student or mentor/mentee relationship to one of changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 11). The “expert” in a community of practice functions as a facilitator, guiding and framing the activities of the novices—fine-tuning, nudging, and setting up both peer interaction and expert-to-apprentice interaction (Johnson, 2001).

Noting that communities of practice are not a new concept, Lave and Wenger build on the facts that communities of practice are everywhere and most people are familiar with the experience (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). They define communities of practice as groups of people “who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting in an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Essentially they consist of “embodied expertise—a deep understanding of complex, interdependent systems that enables dynamic responses to context-specific problems,” the expertise being both tacit as well as explicit (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 9). In fact, it is often noted that membership in any community of practice is characterized by the invisibility of knowledge systems and cultural assumptions, generally tacit and unspoken (Macbeth, 2006).

According to Wenger (2006), there are three characteristics of the community itself in this model that distinguish it from other types of groups. First, the community “has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership implies a commitment to the domain and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people” (Wenger, 2006, sec. 1). The second characteristic is the nature of the group as a community, in that “in pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other”

(Wenger, 2006, sec. 1). Finally, a third characteristic is the actual practice shared by the members—the resources, routine, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, discourse, and style (Wenger, 1998b). Members of a community of practice are practitioners, with shared experiences, strategies, and tools—in short a shared practice (Wenger, 2006).

The concept of “practice” associated with the communities of practice model is also more complex and inclusive than might initially be assumed. As noted by Wenger (1998),

the concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed. It includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views (p. 47).

For Lave and Wenger’s Communities of Practice model, the nature of knowledge or the act of knowing have several dimensions. First, “knowledge is much more a living process than a static body of information” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 9). It is an integral part of activity and relationships, and the community itself is a living repository of knowledge. Second, knowledge is tacit as well as explicit, and the more important is tacit knowledge, as even explicit knowledge is dependent on tacit knowledge to be applied. Sharing tacit knowledge requires interaction, coaching, and apprenticeship of the kind that communities of practice provide (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Third, knowledge is collective; “though the experience of knowing is individual, knowledge is not” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 10). It is

within communities of practice that knowledge is developed, explored, and enriched. Finally, knowledge is dynamic. A domain of knowledge has a stable core or a foundational baseline, that resides in, is established, and is understood by the membership of the community of practice. Additionally, of course, it is the community that expands, builds, and constantly re-shapes knowledge (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

In considering how members of a community create and share knowledge and how new members are enculturated, Lave and Wenger (1991) draw upon the traditional practice of apprenticeship and posit the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as a way of understanding learning. They assert that in this model the phenomenon of learning is more basic than any features related to teaching. When a novice comes to the community of practice, he or she is more than an observer: he/she is involved in “participation as a way of learning—of both absorbing and being absorbed—in the culture of practice...and assemb[ling] a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). They take on legitimate or authentic tasks within the practice and model from exemplars or masters, and through this participation (even in a peripheral role initially) they make meaning and move from a peripheral role to a more central role of full participation in the community, moving from the status of “outsider” to “novice” to “insider,” possibly to “master.” They make the identity of the community of practice theirs, and they adopt the knowledge, skills, values, and culture of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991, 95). Individuals’ identities evolve as they participate in and learn the practices of their communities because identity is deeply embedded in learning in that in a community of practice learners are becoming certain kinds of persons; “identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

One of the interesting aspects of theory and practice in situated cognition and communities of practice is that they address the situated and social nature of the learning of adults, but they often do not explicitly speak to elements of race, gender, and class as variables in the community that affect the meaning-making experience. The focus is typically on the relationship between the individual and the community in reference to the practice of the community and the transition from outsider to insider rather than on the negotiation of the sociocultural features of individuals and the group. Issues of power and attributes of the group membership (race, gender, class) are certainly inherent in the social environment, but they have often been downplayed in the interest of a focus on the development of the practical knowledge of the community (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Higher Education as a Community of Practice

Lave and Wenger's model of engagement in communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation has been applied broadly in the world of adult learning, from examples among practitioners of trades, arts, and crafts in every culture, to the contemporary worlds of medical practice and business. One of the more recent applications of the model is in higher education, both in the enculturation of new academic professionals into the community of practice of research and teaching in higher education as well as the enculturation of college students into the community of practice of the Academy (Casenave, 2002; Cope, 2005; Ding, 2008; Hodgkinson-Williams, Slay, & Sieborger, 2008; Jawitz, 2007; Macbeth, 2006; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Solomon, 2007; Tight, 2008). Academic life at the college level "consists of complex social and political structures; it brings newcomers into the fold through a variety of caretaking and apprenticeship practices,..." (Casenave, 2002, p. 14). The academic or higher education environment has the defining elements and characteristics of a community of practice:

a joint enterprise, relationships of mutual engagement, and the shared collection of common resources—routines, sensibilities, artifact, vocabulary, discourse, and style (Wenger, 1998b). It is a shared domain of common interest among the members, with a set of practices, experiences, values, norms, discourse, tools, and culture (Wenger, 2006). The transition of new members of this community—entering students—parallels Lave and Wenger’s model of legitimate peripheral participation, as novices gradually engage more and more actively in the authentic practices of the community (the Academy).

Certainly, the argument has been made that all students enter the academic community of practice as novices, but for some the transition is more challenging. As noted by O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007), adult students making the transition into higher education often have very significant issues to address, both internal and external, as they enter the academic community and begin to engage or participate in the environment. In the communities of practice framework, it is posited that learning is a function of identity (Wenger, 1998b). One of the dynamics related to adults moving into the academic community of practice is that they almost always have membership in a range of communities of practice (including discourse communities) in the various roles in their lives and usually bring with them a complex and multi-layered set of identities (Michaud, 2011; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). In many cases, as they enter the academic community, they also bring a history of frustrating or negative experiences in traditional educational endeavors and may carry a sense not only of being a “newcomer” or “novice” but of being an “imposter” or an “outsider” as they move into the college environment, making their enculturation into the new community or a sense of belonging more difficult (O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007).

One of the most distinctive elements of higher education as a community of practice, with implications for a student's legitimate peripheral participation and enculturation, is the feature of academic discourse, particularly academic writing (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Flowerdew, 2000). In Lave and Wenger's model of legitimate peripheral participation, discourse within a community of practice is a key to participation and, by extension, to learning. O'Donnell and Tobbell (2007) make the distinction that "language is not a tool by which knowledge or instruction can be transmitted to newcomers to facilitate participation. It is itself a practice of the community, and its acquisition is a process" of enculturation (p. 321-322). As acknowledged by Lave and Wenger (1991), language and discourse "may well have more to do with legitimacy of participation and with access to peripherality than they do with knowledge transmission (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 105). Learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning the communication conventions—the discourse. If the model of cognitive apprenticeship is applied to higher education, then the discourse of the community is central to that apprenticeship, with the Academy being a distinct discourse and literacy community, giving rise to the term "discourse apprenticeship" (Cope, 2005, p. 50). There has been much work related to the struggles of linguistically and culturally diverse novices in the academic world, but fewer by comparison related to the cognitive apprenticeships of novices in academic discourse communities (Macbeth, 2006; Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell & McCune, 2008). For example, much of the work in seeing discourse apprenticeship as inherent in cognitive apprenticeship has focused on ESL students and their enculturation and participation in the academic community, one definition of academic literacy (Cope, 2005). Another body of research has framed any learner's transition into the academic community as being an apprenticeship that is grounded in the acquisition and control of academic discourse (Hirst,

Henderson, Allan, Bode, & Kocatepe, 2004). For either group, drawing from Lave and Wenger's (1991) understanding that a community of practice is characterized by a shared purpose, values, norms, practices, and cultural tools (including language), it is reasonable to see learning as being "about participation in and appropriation of social discourses" in the community (Hirst, et al, 2004). As cognitive apprentices in an academic world (whether in science, the humanities, the social sciences, health sciences, business, or technology), they engage authentically in the discussions, in the reading of academic texts, and in the writing identified with the academic purpose and the community. As they do this, they are not simply developing skills or proficiency, but they are becoming members of the community and developing and re-shaping their identities within that community (Hirst, et al, 2004).

Academic Discourse and Academic Literacy

At the heart of any study of student development of academic literacy is a discussion of what is meant by the terms "academic discourse" and "academic literacy" which are used frequently in related literature. Closely related to these conceptual discussions are the empirical studies that build on those specific understandings to explore the implications of those concept clusters in practice.

Academic Discourse

Much discussion has surrounded the definition of "academic discourse" (Bartholomae, 1986; Bizzell, 1982, 1988; Blanton, 1994; Elbow, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000; Macbeth, 2000; Rose, 1985; Swales, 1990;). Most reference, though in different ways, the uses of language that characterize knowledge construction and communication—reading, writing, and thinking--in higher education (Zamel, 1993). Especially since the mid-1980's, researchers have been examining in different ways students' initiation into academic discourse and academic ways of

thinking (Durst, 2006). Bartholomae (1986) refers to the challenges faced by students who come to write in a higher education environment, noting that

every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history, anthropology, or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community (p. 39).

For many, the assumption of the existence of academic discourse suggests the existence of an academic discourse community—a social group that shares the same behaviors and assumptions about language its use as well as common purposes in its use (Blanton, 1994; Flowerdew, 2000;). The concept of a discourse community suggests the participatory, negotiable nature of academic learning and the understanding that learning is not solely the product of explicit teaching but rather is the result of interactions within the community (Flowerdew, 2000). Swales (1994) lists six criteria for defining a discourse community, all of which apply to higher education: “common goals, participatory mechanisms, information exchange, community-specific genres, a highly specialized terminology, and a high general level of expertise” (p. 129).

To acquire membership in a discourse community, an individual has to learn the conventions that underpin each of these criteria (Flowerdew, 2000). Often this concept of membership in an academic discourse community is grounded in the metaphor of learners initially being “outsiders” and gradually becoming “insiders” (Mlynarczyk, 2006; Williams & Garcia, 2005). This concept of a transition recognizes that “students entering a new community must take on its ways of knowing and its ‘ways with words.’ The idea of a culture suggests the kind of immersion, engagement, contextualization, and fullness of experience, that is necessary

for someone to be initiated into and to be conversant in that culture, for someone to understand the ways in which that culture works” (Zamel, 1993, p. 188). It is clear that this transition from “outsider” to “insider” is much more complex and nuanced than is often characterized. Some have noted the tendency to reduce and oversimplify this transition to a learner’s adoption of surface rhetorical features—paragraph development, standard English—or discipline-specific conventions. However, it is increasingly being understood that the transition from “outsider” to “insider” in the academic community or in a specific discipline within the academic community is a gradual, complex, and sophisticated development (Bartholomae, 1995; Elbow, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000; Macbeth, 2006; Williams & Garcia, 2005; Zamel, 1993).

The Nature of Academic Discourse

Both the concept of academic discourse and the concept of academic discourse community are problematical at many levels, and it is these questions that lead to the dilemmas in the characterization as well as the teaching and learning of academic discourse. A number of writers and researchers in the fields of composition studies, English as a Second Language pedagogy, and linguistics have challenged the concept of academic discourse as an entity, suggesting that the use of language (largely written language) in the academic community is not a static, unified, or monolithic phenomenon, easily identified, de-mystified, and taught, but rather a fluid, complex, and diverse phenomenon, varying across time, space, and culture as well as across the various disciplines and purposes within academia. Many writers and researchers in the field are much more comfortable speaking of multiple academic discourses (Blanton, 1994; Carroll, 2002; Elbow, 1995;).

Another concern is that inherent in the concept of a discourse is the assumption that power as well as an identity of belonging reside in participation in that discourse; with power and

belonging, of course, comes the possibility of marginalization and exclusion (Rose, 1985). As noted by Hyland (2004), academic discourses possess cultural and political authority in the intellectual and even physical situations of the lives of those working within those discourses. There are others who question whether many of the surface attributes most frequently ascribed to academic discourse (definition of terms, citation of sources, text-based reasoning, standard English) privilege learners from upper socioeconomic classes and white cultural/racial backgrounds. Does the requirement that learners adopt the discourse of the academic community deny them the ownership of their home discourses and suggest that they should conform to rather than challenge the hegemonic culture of the academy (Fulkerson, 2005)? Is the dynamic of participation in multiple discourses better characterized as “rhetorical dexterity” than exclusion or loss of identity? (Carter, 2008). To what extent does this conceptualization serve to “cull out” rather than enable students (Bizzell, 1982).

Bartholomae (1995) qualifies the use of the term “discourse,” noting “when we talk about academic writing . . . , I don’t think we are talking about discourse—at least, after Foucault, as discourse is a technical term” (p. 65). He prefers the term “academic writing” and sites where academic writing is produced as discursive spaces. Bartholomae (1995) and Bizzell (1994) also question whether a student’s initiation into an academic discourse community requires him/her to lose participation in existing discourse communities or simply adds to a student’s practice membership in another discourse community. Despite such questions and concerns, however, there is a general agreement that there is a phenomenon known as “academic discourse” or “academic discourses” that inform the educational experiences in higher education and an academic discourse community (Bizzell, 1982, 2000; Blau, 2006; Carroll, 2002; Durst, 2006;

2006; Elbow, 1998; Fulkerson, 2005; Lunsford, 2006; Mlynarczyk, 2006; Pekins, 2006; Zamel, 1993).

Academic Literacy

Associated with the existence of academic discourse and an academic discourse community is the concept of “academic literacy,” defined as fluency in “the specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking that characterize college-level communications. These academic literacy practices represent particular views of the world, uses of language, and ways of construction knowledge within academic disciplines....Gaining academic literacy involves negotiating various academic discourses in multiple circumstances” (Curry, 2004, p. 52). Some discussions reference the broader concept of academic literacy in terms of “college-level writing” or “academic writing,” suggesting that “college writing is a species of intellectual discourse, and the power of language and mind that it calls upon and develops are those that enable students and citizens to become participants in an academic community...” (Blau, 2006, p. 373). As Bartholomae (1995) notes, “academic writing is the real work of the academy” (p. 63).

While early research in the theory and practice of academic literacy focused on a generic set of skills and academic genres that a student must master, more recent research and thought has seen academic literacy as a situated and socially constructed practice, in that sense being fluid and contested (Henderson & Hirst, 2007). Lea and Street (1998) define learning in higher education as “adapting to new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpret and organizing knowledge. Academic literacy practices—reading and writing within disciplines—constitute central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge...” (p. 158).

Clearly, the development of academic literacy or multiple academic literacies by college students is essential in their ability to succeed in the attainment of their academic and even professional goals, and the facilitation and support of that development is a seminal activity in any institution of higher education. In the U.S., this facilitation and support typically is grounded in an institution's writing program, usually beginning in the first-year composition course(s). One concern that is at the heart of much of the discussion in composition studies among composition faculty is the recurring feedback from across colleges and within colleges that students are not "academically literate," that when they move into their disciplinary study they simply cannot write well enough to be successful in the learning dynamic (Ahrenhoester, 2006; Carroll, 2002; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1995).

While such concerns about perceived student inadequacies are certainly not new or unique to this time, two of the major questions that drive the current literature is a discussion of the nature of academic writing and questions about how to best help students develop competence in that crucial ability. Much of the conceptual and empirical literature in the fields of composition studies and linguistics is oriented to that endeavor: how academic writing or college-writing is defined and recognized and how it is most effectively taught or otherwise developed.

Basic Writing in Relation to Academic Literacy

One major strand of the research related to the development of academic literacy, specifically in college-level or academic writing, is related to work with basic writing and basic writing students. In the mid-1960s, with the increased inclusiveness of higher education, open admissions and access policies, and the establishment of community colleges to address that

inclusiveness and the needed accessibility, college administrators and college English faculty recognized the need to support the educational needs of students who were new to the culture of higher education and whose academic skills were deemed not yet ready for disciplinary work. The core areas of the remedial curriculum (as it was frequently referenced then) were reading, writing, and math. Within a decade, the interest in preparing remedial coursework blossomed into a body of research related to institutional and pedagogical support for under-prepared students. Since most (though not all) of the under-prepared students start their academic careers at community colleges because of the open admissions, flexible scheduling, career-oriented programs, geographical proximity, and low costs, much of the conceptual and empirical research even now comes from community college administrators, counselors, and faculty—mostly English faculty. The field, known frequently as Developmental Education or Basic Education, covers a broad range of concerns, including non-academic issues for students (transportation, child care, loans and grants), socialization into the academic community, study skills and self-confidence, and academic strategies and pedagogies (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999; Brilliant, 2005; Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Chung, 2005; Grimes & David, 1999; Higbee, Arendal, & Lundell, 2005; Illich, Hagan, & McCallister, 2004; Kolajo, 2004; Kozeracki, 2002; Zarkesh, 2004;).

Within that broad field, there is a vibrant and prolific body of research as well as national and state-level professional organizations related to developmental or basic writing, among them

The Journal of Basic Writing. Typically, though not exclusively, this research is associated with community colleges. Undergirding the research is a conceptual identification of “basic” writers, defined by Bartholomae (1980) as “writers who need to learn to command a

particular variety of language—the language of a written academic discourse—and a particular variety of language use—writing itself” (p. 176).

One area of study in the field of basic writing relates to retention, persistence, and success of basic writing students based on quantitative data. While even many four-year institutions have some level of basic or developmental coursework, the real home of basic or developmental education (including basic writing) is the community college. Because of the mission of community colleges to provide an inclusive and accessible education, they are characterized by open admissions policies, a deep and broad outreach to otherwise marginalized students, low costs, a range of programs and training, flexible scheduling for adult and other working students, and a wide range of basic education programs in reading, writing, and math for students whose placement testing indicates unreadiness for college-level work. In fact, many see basic education (including basic writing) as central to the community college mission (Patthey-Chavez, Dillon, & Thomas-Spiegel, 2005; Perin, 2006). While statistics vary according to institutions in different locations, nationally at least half of the students enrolling in community college place into at least one basic education course (Darabi, 2006; Perin, 2006; Roueche & Roueche, 1999). The intent for these courses is that they would prepare students for college-level work (Crews & Aragon, 2004; Hassell & Giordano, 2009; Powell, 2009; Southard & Clay, 2004).

Typically, students who are placed by college testing into basic writing courses are especially vulnerable and considered to be “at risk.” They represent a diverse and evolving population, including first-generation college students, students from rural or inner city backgrounds with poor secondary education opportunities, student who have dropped out of high school and earned a GED, adult students, displaced workers, minority students, and English

Language Learners of all types--refugees, first or second generation immigrants, international students, and graduates of ESL programs transitioning into mainstream college curriculum (Adler-Kassner & Glau, 2005). Poverty and lower socioeconomic class is often cited as having the highest single correlation with educational underpreparedness (Darabi, 2006; Malnarich, 2005; Sullivan, 2008). Basic writers usually come from different home dialects and discourses as well as different ways of thinking, both culturally and intellectually (Bizzell, 1986). Basic writing students are at a particularly high risk for attrition because writing is so central to success in virtually all other academic endeavors.

Another area of study related to basic writing is research related to pedagogies and classroom teaching of basic writing courses. Among these studies, a number deal with understanding the nature of basic writing and basic writers (Adler-Kassner, 2000; Bartholomae, 1987, 1980; Lunsford, 1979; Rose, 1988; Shaughnessy, 1976; Sternglass, 2000). What the empirical studies reveal is that basic writers are a very diverse group, impossible to generalize about. While some studies would see basic writers as functioning at cognitive levels below that required for analysis, synthesis, and abstract reasoning (Lunsford, 1979), others (Rose, 1988) would see the sociocultural and socioeconomic factors as more influential in their preparedness than cognitive levels. In her well-known six-year longitudinal study of basic writers at the City College of New York, Sternglass (2000) concludes from her case studies that time and patience is needed for basic writers to grow into academic literacy, but they have the potential to succeed when paced and scaffolded in analytical tasks. Other studies (both conceptual and empirical) focus on pedagogy, including types of writing assignments or texts (Bartholomae 1993; Bartholomae & Elbow, 1995; Bizzell, 2000; Elbow, 1995; McAlexander, 2000; Rose, 1983). Many of the recent studies related to basic writing in community college are oriented to theory

and implementation of learning communities with basic writing integrated into curricular clusters (Darabi, 2006; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; James, Bruch, & Jehangir, 2006; Kaspar, 2000; Killacky, Thomas, & Accomando, 2002; Malnarich, 2005; Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002; Raftery, 2005; Tinto, 1998, 1997; Wilcox & delMas, 1997). In some of the studies, the learning communities are designed to connect basic writers with disciplinary or content courses (Darabi, 2006; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; James, Bruch, & Jehangir, 2006; Wilcox & delMas, 1997), with findings that show increased retention and engagement of students as well as higher academic achievement. Other studies focus on learning communities specifically designed for ESL students or ELL basic writers (Kaspar, 2000; Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002). In all cases, the conclusions of the studies suggest that learning communities have positive impacts on students' likelihood of success in college and their integration into the academic life of the college. There are many limitations in the applicability of these studies, however. The implementation of a model of learning communities requires an exceptionally supportive administrative framework and flexible and motivated faculty, committed to the endeavor. This is certainly not going to be a curricular or pedagogical option for most students. Additionally, the students in learning communities (even the ESL- or ELL-based communities) are typically traditional students. However, the conclusions drawn from the research highlight the role of the development of the community and the social context of learning as being at least as important as the conscious and deliberate linking of content and writing in establishing the beginnings of academic literacy.

College-level Composition Classes

When students successfully complete any basic writing courses specified by an institution's placement testing, they move into college-level composition or first-year composition (FYC), traditionally the course(s) that are expected "to prepare them to do the work

of the academy” (Bartholomae, 2007, p. 98). English composition has been characterized as the “anchor course for their dreams, as its purpose is to expose them to the practices of what many call *academic discourse*” (Pekins, 2006, p. 232). There are a number of strands of research in composition studies related to college composition courses, including research that seeks to define what college-level writing is and what the relevant attributes of such writing are. This is one of the more interesting questions in discussions of academic or college-level writing, as it is certainly a contested term; there is little agreement on the specific purposes of a college composition course, the identifiable characteristics of college-level writing, or the criteria for recognizing it (Bartholomae, 1995; Bizzell, 1982; Blau, 2006; Griffin, Falberg, Krygier, 2010; Lunsford, 2006; Mlynarczyk, 2006; Pekins, 2006; Sullivan 2006;).

As noted in his review of the state of composition studies related to college composition courses, Fulkerson (2005) notes the divergent and much less unified nature of the discipline in the 21st century and the three broad schools of thought regarding the purposes of college writing courses and programs. One he identifies as an expanded “expressive” approach, placing the writer and his/her authentic voice at the center of the composition process and “assigning the highest value to the writer and her imaginative, psychological, social and spiritual development” (Burnham, 2001, p. 19). The second broad approach is identified by Fulkerson (2005) as critical/cultural studies, an outgrowth of composition’s “social turn” and reflecting much of the research and discussion in social sciences and humanities. This approach itself has diverse voices and expressions, but is grounded in critical theory and is oriented to encouraging students to recognize, analyze and challenge the social and institutional hegemonic discourses and cultures in terms of social justice, race, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation. This theoretical and pedagogical perspective is sharply criticized by Fish (2008, 2009), who advocates for higher

education in general as well as college composition a focus on “disciplinary materials” and “analytic skills” rather than social, political, or ideological content (2008). The third broad approach identified by Fulkerson is rhetorical, supported by the 1999 delineation of the standards for a first-year writing course set up by the Council for Writing Program administrators, oriented to the writing in academic genres, including argument, and the general expectations of academic writing. It is in this approach that concerns about academic literacy and academic writing are most directly addressed. Despite the lack of empirical data on composition courses nationally, Fulkerson suggests that this is likely to be the most dominant of the three broad approaches in college writing instruction (2005).

A third theme in the research on college-level writing is the debate regarding which theoretical and pedagogical approaches are most helpful in facilitating the development of writing in college students. Interestingly, in the last twenty years there has been a “sharp decline in empirical studies of writing at the postsecondary level, in favor of more humanistically grounded theoretical and critical work” related to the learning and teaching dynamic in the college writing classroom (Durst, 2006, p. 78). Certainly this literature is diverse, beginning with theoretical explorations of the underpinnings of composition (Bizzell, 1992; Rose, 1988, Elbow, 1995). There is also a wide range of discussions regarding various pedagogical strategies for helping students with invention, development, revision, and assessment as well as online and electronic writing technologies (Blaauw-Hara, 2006; Blau, 2006; Boynton, 2003; ; Flower, 1990; Hawisher & Selfe, 1999; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Rose, 1983; Smith, 1997; Sommers, 1980; Straub, 1996).

A fourth broad theme of research related to college-level composition that is relevant to this study is the transfer of learning in college writing, i.e. the extent and process in which

students take what they have learned in college composition classes and apply it in other academic writing situations in the disciplines. In some cases the studies are oriented to the transitions of student writers from one level of writing to the next (e.g. from basic writing to college-level composition or from first-semester composition to the next sequenced course), as seen in the studies done by Hassel and Giordano (2009) and Patthey-Chavez, Dillon, and Thomas-Spiegel (2005) and the development of a rubric by Williams and Garcia (2005). Other studies focus on the evolution of student writing as students move from composition courses to writing in college-level disciplinary courses, such as those done by Fallon, Lahar, and Susman (2009), Ahrenhoerster (2006), Sommers and Saltz (2004), and Curtis and Herrington (2003).

The findings of these studies provide some avenues for understanding the process of growth in academic literacy. First, transfer of learning related to literacy tasks from one academic setting to another (e.g. writing skills, analysis of text) is limited because typically the differences between the initial learning experience and later ones are great. The second theme in the findings is that the development of academic writing competency is not mastered in one or two courses (Fallon, Lahar, & Susman, 2009). As noted by Sommers and Saltz (2004), “For all the students in our study, learning to write has been a slow process, infinitely varied, with movements backward and forward, starts and stops, with losses each time a new method or discipline is attempted” (p. 145). Also, since most of the participants in these studies are traditional, native English speakers, the complexities associated with the academic literacy journey for adult ELLs would be significantly greater.

Writing Across the Curriculum

One of the curricular developments that emerged in the 1970s as a way of addressing concerns about college students developing the ability to think, read, and especially

to write in the disciplines of college work was known as “Writing Across the Curriculum,” (WAC), associated movement, “Writing in the Disciplines” (WID), or “discipline-specific literacy” (Buehl & Moore, 2009). Noted by Bartholomae (2007) as another approach to preparing students to do the work of writing in the academy, the WAC movement was grounded in the ideas of James Britton at the University of London Institute of Education from 1975. This perspective “viewed writing...as a gradually developing accomplishment, thoroughly bound up with the particular intellectual goals and traditions of each discipline or profession, not as a single set of readily-generalizable skills learned once and for all. They also theorized writing in terms of disciplinary learning and personal development, not discrete, generalizable skills. (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street, & Donahue, 2009, p. 465). These ideas resonated in higher education in the U.S. because of the dilemmas posed by the dramatic increases in the number of colleges and universities in the 1960s and the establishment of open admissions institutions to bring into higher education millions of students who would have otherwise been excluded. Besides the early development of basic writing programs, there were few avenues for these students to gain the writing abilities necessary for study in the disciplines of higher education and the academic discourse communities associated with them (Russell, 1992). Indeed, some compare the challenges students have learning to write in the disciplines to being an L2 or English Language Learner, with the need to negotiate not only lexical differences and the distinctions between global and local discursive practices, but differences of culture and identity (Hickey, 2001).

U.S. educators adopted the British term “writing across the curriculum” to designate a model of teaching in the academic disciplines that was grounded in students using writing as an instrument of learning the content of the discipline as well as learning to be proficient in the

written discourse of the discipline. Rather than being simply an approach to learning to write in particular genres competently, it was designed as an exercise in epistemology (McLeod & Maimon, 2000). Through the 1970's, 1980's, and early 1990's, a variety of ways of implementing this basic educational model spread across U.S. colleges and universities from community colleges to selective private liberal arts colleges. In some cases, the faculty in each disciplinary course taught the theory and practice of writing in that field; in other situations, students took upper division writing courses that focused on writing in their major fields of study. Other implementations included senior capstone courses in the discipline of study or linked courses (McLeod & Maimon, 2000). Most recently, the academically oriented first-year seminar and writing intensive courses have become expressions of the WAC principles as well as serving the purpose of grounding students in academic literacy fundamentals. As noted in Brent (2005), based on his study at the University of Calgary, "the location of writing-intensive courses within disciplines answers the need to immerse students in the discourse of specific academic disciplines rather than in the gray all-purpose academic discourse that can come to characterize the 'research paper' as taught in many composition courses" (p. 259).

Bazerman (1991) cites three domains of WAC research: the actual writing of the disciplines, the writing pedagogy in disciplinary classroom, and the role of writing in the development of individual students. Study of the actual writing of the disciplines is a text-based area of research and is not as prominent in the literature related to this study. Certainly, however, Ken Hyland's 2004 book *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing* is a significant work that explores analytically the nature of published academic work in a range of disciplines, emphasizing the processes and social interactions that shape the published disciplinary discourses. Charles Bazerman's work, as exemplified in "From Cultural Criticism

to Disciplinary Participation: Living with Powerful Words” (1992), is also oriented to how knowledge is constructed and used in the social and textual practices of different disciplines.

One of the most prominent and seminal works in research related to the second domain, writing pedagogy and writing activities in the disciplinary classroom, is *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Student in Four Disciplines* (1990) by Walvoord and McCarthy. This was based on a naturalistic inquiry into the teaching and learning in four different college classes (business, history, psychology, and biology), specifically as it related to student writing in that discipline. It was designed to respond to a number of needs suggested by other research, including investigations to explain how students think and write in college and the relationship of students and their contexts. It also sought to explore the types of difficulties that novice writers encounter and the nature of literacy in specific academic situations; what constitutes good writing in academic contexts and what the conventions of academic writing are; and whether students need different strategies for writing and thinking in various disciplines (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

An early work that is oriented to the third research domain in WAC is Chiseri-Strater (1991), a study based on the 1987-1988 experiences of two college students as they negotiated the contextual factors in academic writing and developed as student writers in the various discourses of different academic settings. Another extended research study in this domain is *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers* (Carroll 2002), based on a four-year qualitative study done at Pepperdine University which addresses the development of students as writers and as individuals as they negotiate the range of literacy tasks required not only in college composition courses but in various disciplinary courses. The students in the study moved from basic writing courses through the composition sequences, general education

courses and the writing required, and finally into the disciplinary courses of their major courses of study

Writing Across the Curriculum is still being implemented in a variety of expressions during the later 20th century and early 21st century (Thaiss & Porter, 2010), including conceptualizing first-year seminars and writing-intensive courses as extensions of WAC and relating WAC to metagenres (Brent, 2005; Carter, 2007). There are, however, a number of issues inherent in the model that have created difficulties that kept it from being much more widely implemented. First, it requires major institutional commitments to faculty development, as WAC essentially aimed to transform writing pedagogy. One of the major elements of a WAC program is that faculty in disciplinary or content fields must be trained to teach writing to support student learning and student fluency in the discourse of the discipline. Second WAC is based on extensive, on-going, and time-consuming collaborative work between faculty across disciplines. Third, it requires a substantial institutional commitment to a discipline-based writing center or writing fellows program. An even greater institutional commitment is required to fund administrative leadership, release time and/or stipends for all faculty involved, and a specific model of WAC assessment (McLeod & Maimon, 2000). Other concerns raised regarding WAC as a model for the development of academic literacy in the disciplines is that it focuses specifically on the cognitive development, less on the psychological or personal development, of students, and it does not address any issues related to social contexts or social or cultural issues, leaving many to see it as limited in its scope and usefulness in a broader conception of academic literacy.

Adult ELLs and Academic Literacy

One particular group of community college students with significant challenges in developing academic literacy and competence in working in the academic discourse community is adult ELL students. There have been a number of both conceptual discussions and empirical studies addressing various aspects of the teaching/learning dynamic for these students, and each of these bodies of research, despite their differences in emphasis, theme, or scope, is relevant in providing a context for my study.

Writing Preparation in ESL and ESP/EAP Classrooms

One of the areas in this body of pertinent research is work in some of the different programs for teaching English to non-native speakers: English as a Second Language (ESL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as they work on the development of academic English. As indicated in Hirvela (2010), since the early- to mid-1980's, writing specialists in ESL as well as EAP have explored the ways in which these L2 writers experience the process of learning to write in English, particularly for academic purposes in post-secondary settings. In fact, the bulk of the research on ESL writing has explored the undergraduate academic environment. Early studies (Spack, 1988; Raimes, 1985; Zamel 1983) were typically case studies and focused on composing processes of students in the ESL or EAP classroom. Later research in the 1990's often involved longitudinal research and, increasingly, qualitative research following college ESL writers through their ESL/EAP experiences and into their college-level writing courses and disciplinary content courses in their undergraduate studies (Casenave, 2002; Curry, 2001; Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; Ivanic, 1998; Leki, 2007, 1999; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2006; Spack, 1997; Sternglass, 1997). The findings of these studies are particularly insightful in that themes of cross-cultural understandings of learning significantly

colored the focus on the development of academic literacy and disciplinary enculturation (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; Spack, 1997). Additionally, the studies demonstrated that development of academic literacy was more vividly experienced and understood in the context of disciplinary classes rather than being limited to the ESL or English composition classroom (Spack, 1997).

Another avenue of research in ESL/EAP instruction focuses on the integration of disciplinary content with English language instruction in an effort to more smoothly enculturate the students into the academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening conventions (Benesch, 1988; Hirsch, 1988; Kutz, 2004; Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002; Snow, 2005; Zamel & Spack, 2006). Although much of this research is focused on the theory and practice of second language (L2) acquisition, and as such has limited applicability for a study that focuses on ELL students in college-level disciplinary courses, the research illustrates the strength of descriptive qualitative research in illuminating learners' experiences in the development of academic literacy. Also this body of research is characterized by recurring themes of meaning-making in a community or in the social context of peers and teachers and the process of negotiating changing and sometimes unspoken expectations.

Academic Literacy for Graduate and Professional Adult ELLs

While not directly applicable to this study which focuses on community college adult ELL students, there is a helpful body of research that focuses on the work of graduate, post-graduate, and professional academic writing situations faced by adult ELLs (Braine, 2002; Cheng, 2008; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Ferenz, 2005; Flowerdew, 2000; Lillis & Curry, 2006; Swales, 1990). While the population studied in this body of research would not initially seem to have many of the same challenges faced by the adult undergraduate ELL students in community

college, a great many of the issues are the same: the ambiguities in the nature of academic literacy and the diverse academic literacies of different disciplines as well as the students' struggles in the transitions from "outsider" to "insider in an academic discourse community through legitimate peripheral participation. One of the interesting themes that emerges in this body of research is that even at very advanced levels of academic training, ELLs experience the same challenges that ESL writers and early undergraduates do as they undertake initiation into a new discourse community. They are potentially members of the community of practice (the academic disciplinary community); they are, at least initially, marginalized or peripheral to the activity, and they make meaning only through activity, interaction, and engagement in the practice (Flowerdew, 2000). That these experiences are, to a great extent, consistent for adult ELLs at all levels of academic literacy is very helpful. The dynamic is inherent in the transition into any new discourse community rather than peculiar to adult ELL writers in community college. Certainly the adult community college ELL undergraduate has steeper obstacles to face in many ways, but the dynamic has many commonalities—the process of coming to understand the expectations for academic writing (often tacit in the environment), the nature of academic literacy as situated and highly contextualized, and the interaction with other members of the community (Braine, 2002; Ferenz, 2005; Flowerdew, 2000;).

Academic Literacy for ELL Undergraduates

The experiences of adult ELL undergraduates, the majority of whom are in community college, are the subject of a broad and multi-faceted body of research. Certainly, these students face the same social, economic, academic, and cultural challenges inherent in their experiences as ELLs and adult learners, as well as basic writing students. They are still involved in the effort

to make the transition to English in post-secondary work while dealing with the broader issues of academic literacy that all undergraduate students face.

One theme in this body of research is the frustrating dilemma that there is some ambiguity about what is actually considered to “college-level” or “academic writing” as expected in writing courses and disciplinary courses (Blau, 2006; Fishman & McCarthy, 2002; Griffin, Falberg, & Krygier, 2010; Lunsford, 2006; Mlynarczyk, 1998, 2006; Sullivan, 2006; Williams & Garcia, 2005; Zamel, 1993). While this variability in expectations and definitions is applicable to college-level writing generically, a number of articles are related to experiences of ESL students learning how to produce academic writing when it seems so difficult to define and in a sense is a shifting target, as the definition varies from course to course and discipline to discipline—even from professor to professor. Much of this discussion is conceptual and is sometimes related to teaching and the role of particular models of writing pedagogy. As noted in Fulkerson (2005), some see rhetorical patterns and genres as the heart of academic writing, while others see quality of critical thought and personal, authentic reflection to be the essence of college-level discourse. This body of literature is helpful in informing this study because it delineates some of the different conceptualizations of “college-level writing” which are foundational to understanding how adult ELL student negotiate academic literacy. It also suggests the necessity of transparency and explicitness in delineating the expectations of academic writing for all students but especially adult ELLs.

Next, even when the concept of academic writing is articulated and criteria are identified, there is a considered debate over whether there is a single type of academic writing and some type of unified academic discourse community or whether there are multiple, complex, and multi-dimensional academic discourse communities, which no single writing experience could

prepare a student for (Casenave, 2002). At one time it was thought that “once L2 students had learned English they would not be at a disadvantage and could be fully integrated into the work of every classroom” (Spack, 1997, p. 6). However, though proficiency in standard English is a necessary prerequisite for success in an academic English-speaking institution, more recent research has shown the development of what is thought of as academic literacy at the college-level is much more complex and almost idiosyncratic to specific situations (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; Spack, 1997).

Academic literacy has become understood as even more than “disciplinary enculturation,” entailing much more than simply learning the genres and conventions of specific academic disciplines (Smoke, 2004; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1993). There is an increasing body of literature that sees academic literacy, especially for the undergraduate ELL, as a long and “ever-changing process of acquiring—that is internalizing and gaining ownership of—academic literacy, defined...as the ability to read and write the various texts assigned in college” (Spack, 1997, p. 4). All of this is grounded in a context of linguistic and cognitive development, previous educational experiences or educational capital and cultural background. There are also issues of negotiated identity in the academic environment (Ivanic, 1998) and social and even political interactions (Spack, 1997). Though much of the work in these areas is conceptual rather than empirical, the multiplicity of the factors that underlie the nature of writing experiences for ELLs should be considered in further empirical research.

A third theme of discussion in the scholarship is how ELL students should be prepared for writing in the academic disciplines. There is discussion of whether a single English faculty member can or should try to teach students the academic discourse conventions in other disciplines (Leki & Carson, 1994; Spack, 1988), with the conclusion that it is not possible nor

wise to expect a single composition faculty member to help students address all the different disciplinary writing demands. Others consider types of teaching support a student's ability to prepare for academic situations (Ahrenhoerster, 2006; Carroll & Dunkelblau, 2011; Fallon, Lahar, & Susman, 2009; Hassel & Giordano, 2009). Addressing this point, there are a number of studies that speak to the role of genre and teaching genre for ELL students (Leki & Carson, 1997; Swales, 1990). Each of these studies suggests possible factors or experiences that contribute to a student's initiation into the academic discourse community and provides a foundation for the anticipated study to identify and explore factors that facilitate that process. One of the most prominent models in the research is curricular learning communities, in which ELL students in community college (in either ESL or basic writing courses) are linked with curricular content courses, with disciplinary genres as a common writing experience (Darabi, 2006; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002; Kasper, 2000; Smith, 2010). While the students in my study are not in learning communities, the findings of the empirical research suggest themes that may emerge: the interplay of speaking, reading, writing and listening; the support of other students in the process of transitioning into new ways of thinking and being; and the explicit explanations of expectations for writing in the discipline.

There are an increasing number of studies that underscore the importance of addressing sociocultural issues in the ESL classroom and basic writing classroom, undergirding the academic instruction with an emancipatory focus. This literature, both conceptual and empirical, supports helping students to not only gain the writing ability to articulate academic ideas but to develop a critical consciousness by which he or she can explore and challenge the racial, gender, class, and cultural assumptions as well as the power relationships in the academic environment that can set up a marginalized identity (Benesch, 2001; Bizzell, 1982; Bloom, 1996; Clark, 1960;

Curtis & Herrington, 2003; Delpit, 1993; Rose, 1985; Shor, 2005; Tinberg, 2001). While this research study is not specifically oriented to an emancipatory philosophical underpinning, the nature of academic literacy as situated in a sociocultural context suggests the likelihood that some of the themes that will emerge will reference an awareness of marginalizing experiences and the power of academic literacy to identify and challenge them. While the Academic Literacies Model does not explicitly address emancipatory educational purposes, it does recognize and include as factors as dynamics in academic literacy the power relations inherent in control of discourse.

Finally, there is a body of research that explores the nature of an ELL student's experiences as he/she moves from ESL coursework into basic and college composition, and from there into undergraduate disciplinary writing, particularly in terms of their challenges and how they negotiate those challenges. For the most part, because of the nature of this research, the studies are case studies or ethnographies, focusing on specific individuals or cohorts in classes. One set of challenges explored in the research is related to helping students see "the big picture" and make sense of the academic community and the sociocultural constructs so that the student can write to learn as well as learn to write (Kutz, 2004; Smoke, 2004; Sternglass, 2004). The interaction between writing, learning, context, and disciplinary content is a complex and sophisticated one, but one that may well emerge as learners in the study reflect on their transition into academic literacy, moving from the margins to more active participation (Zamel, 2000). These studies focus on the progress of students in academic environments and are typically longitudinal studies; they have the immediacy of rich and descriptive qualitative data, but they lack the perspective of a reflection by the student of the process or "journey" in the progress from "outsider" to "novice" to "insider."

Part of the challenge faced by all novice academic writers, but particularly ELL students, is the lack of explicitness and transparency in the expectations and processes in the development of academic literacy. As noted by Spack (1997), “we have relative little substantive knowledge of the processes through which students acquire the academic discourses necessary to achieve success... We need to investigate what it means for students to undergo a long and ever-changing process of acquiring—that is, internalizing and gaining ownership of—academic literacy....” (p. 3-4). The more recent literature has enriched the understandings of the day-to-day experiences in ESL classrooms, but not the broader perspective of the transition into academic writing in disciplinary classrooms. As noted in Macbeth (2006), the prevailing perspective on academic writing or academic literacy is that it is a sociocultural experience and process, but there is relatively little literature on academic writing that addresses exactly how a novice in the academic community goes about learning its sociocultural practices and the cultural conventions. Working from Lave and Wenger’s discussions of communities of practice and seeing the academic environment as a community of practice, she comments that “while it is an entirely agreeable argument that the academic discourse community and its rites of membership are socioculturally constructed, the argument raises the question of *how* this is so—for example, what cultural practices might look like as we assemble them in locally situated interactions, and how we teach such practices to newcomers” (p. 181).

One mark of membership in any community of practice is that the knowledge systems and cultural assumptions that ground participation are invisible, tacit, and routinely unspoken. This, however, can be a serious obstacle for any novice academic writers, and especially ELLs, as “outsiders,” who are trying to understand and master the tacit practices and discourses of the academic “insiders” (Macbeth, 2006). In their study of “non-traditional” (adult) student writers,

Lillis and Turner (2001) shifted from a consideration of student “inadequacies” to an analysis of the students’ confusion when facing a writing task: while “they were expected to write within a particular configuration of conventions, they were constantly struggling to find out what these conventions were” (p. 58). The fact that the conventions seemed strange was compounded by the fact that they were treated as if they were common sense and transparently meaningful (Lillis & Turner, 2001). Curry (1993), in a study of the demands of academic literacy on ELL students, found a similar lack of transparency and explicit writing guidelines in the disciplinary classrooms because much of conceptual knowledge was tacit and deeply embedded in the social practices of the field. Perhaps, as Bizzell (1982) suggested quite early in the work with academic discourse and ELL writers: “We have spent much scholarly energy on exploring students’ writing processes. But we have not sufficiently considered the nature of academic discourse as a form of language use that unites a particular community, and we have not examined the relationship between the academic discourse community and the communities from which our student come....We have not demystified academic discourse” (p. 193).

Clearly, with such a rich and rapidly developing body of scholarship, there is an increasing interest in the dynamic of ELL students as they move toward the development of academic literacy in disciplinary work in higher education. However, there is a relative paucity of literature that focuses on the specific challenges of adult ELL students as they negotiate those experiences in the academic environment of the community college. The research related to this group from an Adult Education perspective is almost non-existent. Also, there are few studies that use the perspective of a student who has been relatively successful in the early part of the transition from “outsider” to “insider” in the academic discourse community in order to explore

what factors have facilitated that development and how the student negotiated the challenges inherent in that transition. It is that research niche that this study will seek to address.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to identify how adult ELL community college student perceive their experience in the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing, and to explore their perceptions of the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy. There are two research questions that undergird the study: 1) How do adult ELLS in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced? 2) Among adult ELL students assessed by faculty to be successful in academic writing competency, what factors, attitudes, and experiences have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy?

The most appropriate methodology for this study was a mixed methods research paradigm. The first research question was well-addressed by a survey of adult ELL students to gather a broad picture of factors, experiences, and attitudes that have characterized their experiences with academic writing. The second research question was most suitably addressed by a qualitative research component, a basic interpretive approach, because of the richness and complexity of the learners' experiences in their development of academic literacy.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of this methodology, exploring the controversy regarding its emergence as a research paradigm and the strengths and flexibility of its application. The specific design that was used in the study is then explained. The chapter then addresses the researcher's background, followed by an overview of the participant selection, data collections and analysis, and verification strategies that were used.

Mixed Methods Research Paradigm

The broad arena of empirical research is the process of “developing systematized knowledge gained from observations...of phenomena under study” (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 7). Descriptive empirical research (as opposed to experimental empirical research) seeks to observe phenomena and analyze data with no control or modifications of the environment, simply to develop an understanding of some aspect of the phenomenon as it is (Lauer & Asher, 1988). Traditionally, there have been two broad paradigms (worldviews or belief systems) in descriptive empirical research: quantitative and qualitative (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). These two broad approaches to research differ in a number of fundamental respects: epistemology (the nature of knowledge), logical reasoning, image of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the subjects, the research strategy, the scope of findings, and the nature of the data gathered (Bryman, 1999).

Quantitative Research

A quantitative research methodology traditionally relies on a positivist epistemology and a logical approach of deductive reasoning (testing of theories and hypotheses), an image of reality as static and quantifiable, a distant or objective relationship between the researcher and subject, a structured research strategy, nomothetic or generalizeable findings, and the development of numerical or quantitative data sets, standardized data collection, and statistical analysis (Bryman, 1999). It is extremely useful for studying particular questions and variables related to large numbers of people and provides relatively precise numerical data, and the results are relatively independent of the researcher (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Drawing from the values of positivism, many advocates of quantitative methods say that this approach to research is more firmly grounded in “science,” characterized by standardized measures, researcher

objectivity, and a scientific paradigm of confirmation and falsification with procedures that are carried out in a detached and uninvolved way (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Because of these characteristics, quantitative research has traditionally been viewed with a high degree of credibility.

However, there are a number of limitations in quantitative research. First, though it has the appearance of complete objectivity in its data, there are many decisions made in the research process that shape the nature of the research and the resulting data: decisions about what to study, what problems are considered important, how the problems are defined, what instruments are used or developed to measure the features of the population, how the population is chosen, what decisions are made in the data analysis (e.g., selection of alpha levels), what conclusions are drawn based on the data analysis, and what elements of the data are emphasized in practical application. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) note, “the conduct of fully objective and value-free research is a myth, even though the regulatory ideal of objectivity can be a useful one” (p. 16). Quantitative methods can and almost surely will reflect researchers’ agendas and the social, cultural, and political contexts of research communities (Kirsch, 1992).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is often associated with a phenomenological theoretical base, grounded in understanding phenomena as they are perceived and experienced by the subjects (Patton, 2002). It is based on a constructivist epistemological perspective, and predominantly uses inductive logical reasoning. It sees reality as being individually constructed and experienced from moment to moment and uses a more flexible and emergent, even unstructured research strategy (Creswell, 2003). Typically the relationship between the researcher and the subjects is closer and more interactive, often with the researcher being inside the environment to

be studied. The scope of qualitative research findings is ideographic and specific to the time and place of the study, rather than generalizable. (Bryman, 1999). Usually, qualitative research studies individuals, small groups, or very specific environments, and the data is rich and descriptive. (Lauer & Asher, 1988). It works inductively from extensive textual data developed in naturalistic settings and can describe complex, dynamic, or highly individual situations. The central goal of qualitative research is to develop insight into complex or hard-to-measure human behavior or experience (Crowson, 1994). The instrument in qualitative research is principally the researcher, and the data is in the form of in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation (field observation), and written documents and artifacts (Patton, 2002). Advocates of qualitative research cite its ability to facilitate study of issues in depth, nuance, and detail without preconceived categories of analysis, its ability to capture the lived experience of the subjects in relation to the variables, and its ability to be open and responsive to the data as it is received (Patton, 2002).

There are, however, a number of limitations in qualitative research: the susceptibility of the results to the researcher's biases and idiosyncrasies, the lack of generalizability of the knowledge produced, the difficulty of making any kind of prediction, the amount of time required for the researcher to collect data, and the perceived lower credibility of the conclusion (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Mixed Methods Research

Over the last century, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) note that "advocates of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms have engaged in ardent dispute," often assuming positions of methodological "purity" and positing that one or the other is ideal for research and is inherently incompatible with the other (p. 14). Sometimes this debate in the fields of social and

behaviorial sciences has been referenced as the paradigm wars or the quantitative/qualitative debate (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

In recent years, however, there has been movement in the direction of de-fusing the debate, positing that, in fact, there is not a simple binary contrast but rather a range of positions and approaches in research methodologies (Hammersly, 1999) and that mixing features of the two broad approaches in the same study would be not only possible but advantageous (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). There is essentially no “war,” as both types of research seek to “provide warranted assertions about human beings and the environments in which they live and evolve,” and both use empirical observations and both describe data, develop explanations from their data, and propose rationales regarding the outcomes (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15). Proponents of this position note that while there are significant differences in their fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge and their approaches, research is increasing less “either/or” or “versus” and more a matter of where models and methods lie on a continuum (Creswell, 2003) as well as how they might work together to address a research situation.

The philosophical and practical needs of research in the last two decades have made the research communities in the social and behavioral sciences increasingly open to the development of a third major approach to research: mixed methods research. By the early 1990’s, there began to be more serious interest in the value of drawing from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research in the interest of appropriateness, design flexibility, and responsiveness to the situation and the research questions (Patton, 2002). “Because qualitative and quantitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research” (Patton, 2002, p.14). In fact, mixed method strategies afford

opportunities to use multiple sources of information from multiple approaches to gain new insights into the question at hand (Axinn & Pearce, 2006).

Mixed methods research is formally defined as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Philosophically, it is grounded in pragmatism, and it is seen to be inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2002). In the spirit of pragmatism, a mixed methods approach uses “methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality” (Patton, 2002, p. 72). The most fundamental concern is the research question and what research methods will offer the best chance to obtain useful answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Citing Johnson and Turner (2003) and this fundamental principle of mixed methods research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) posit that “researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses” (p. 18). Or, as Patton (2002) indicates, the researcher “can build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach” (p. 307).

A number of purposes for and contributions of mixed methods research are cited by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004). First, they note that methods triangulation, using multiple methods of data collection related to the same phenomenon to corroborate findings, is one reason to employ a mixed methods research approach and one potential value of its use. This might involve comparing and integrating data collected through a qualitative method with data collected using a quantitative method (Patton, 2002). Another reason is complementarity,

recognizing that some aspects of research questions are best answered in a quantitative study, while others can only be addressed in a qualitative study. Using both methods in a complementary fashion can provide a more complete and holistic picture of the situation and answer to the research question. A third purpose for mixed methods research is a fuller development of knowledge, using the findings from one type of research to help to inform the other method. A fourth contribution of mixed methods research is that it may lead to rich data and perhaps paradoxes and contradictions that may subsequently lead to a re-framing of the research question. And finally, a mixed methods approach to research can expand the breadth and scope of the inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004).

The strengths of a mixed methods research approach are obvious: the strengths of both methods and the flexibility to use whatever methods will best respond to the research question(s). The integration of both quantitative and qualitative can give data that is broad and reflective of large groups while also focusing on specific individuals in rich and descriptive ways. Qualitative research, in particular, acknowledges the complexities of the question and the individuals; it allows the themes to emerge inductively from the raw data.

On the other hand, the weaknesses of a mixed methods approach are potentially those of each of the methods (Axinn & Pearce, 2006). In particular, since the researcher is the primary instrument for the qualitative portion of the study, there must be particular care to systematically and rigorously adhere to fieldwork methods and to maintain the credibility of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Part of the rigor of method and credibility of the researcher comes from triangulation of data (a variety of data sources); triangulation of investigators (multiple researchers working with the data); triangulation of theory (the use of multiple perspectives to

interpret a set of data); and triangulation of methodologies (the use of multiple methods to study a single problem) (Patton, 2002).

Recently, a great deal of work has been done to build on these basic understandings of mixed methods research in the interest of laying a methodological guide or road map for researchers and in the interest of systematizing a developing research design and applying criteria of rigor (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). One of the interesting problems in a recently developing research approach and parallel body of research literature is that the naming of the research approach is quite varied across researchers: multi-methods, multi-strategy, mixed methods, or mixed methodology (Bryman, 2006). Other variants to refer to the design are methodological triangulation, multimethodological research, and multimethod designs (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). All of these refer to an approach defined most simply as “the mixing of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Another aspect of the current research into the development of more systematization of mixed methods designs is the development of a typology for mixed methods work along several parameters: the sequence, priority, stages, and theoretical perspectives of the elements (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

The sequence parameter is quite simply whether the quantitative and qualitative data is gathered sequentially or concurrently. Typically, as indicated in Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003), when the qualitative data is gathered first, the intent is often to explore the problem under study and then follow-up with quantitative data in a large sample (sequential exploratory design). When the sequence is reversed, the intent is usually to explore

a large sample first to test variables and then pursue a few cases in more depth to better understand and explain the phenomenon (sequential exploratory design). When both types of data are gathered concurrently, the intent is often to compare data to discern congruency in the findings. In some cases, the data collection types may be sequential and iterative, moving from one to the other, and then back to the first. The decision on the sequence of data collection is significant as a factor in the written report, in that multiple phases of data collection must be reported as well as the rationale for the decision.

The priority parameter refers to the emphasis or importance ascribed to each type of data, either because of the researcher's comfort with one or the other, the practical constraints of data collection, the preferences or needs of the audience, or the demands of the research question. This is also sometimes known as the "dominant-less" or "equivalent status" study design. In a "dominant-less" design, the researcher conducts the majority of the study using a single dominant method with a small component of the overall study drawn from the alternative method. In the "equivalent status" design, the researcher conducts the study using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches equally to understand the phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Some fields are clearly historically more oriented to quantitative or qualitative research, and a research design in that field may emphasize the favored approach with the other used to simply to provide background or illustration (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The third parameter is manner in which the two types of research are integrated in terms of the various stages of research: development of the research question, data collection, data analysis, or interpretation. How is each type of research incorporated into each stage of the project? At what points does the researcher begin to compare data from each source? As indicated by Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003), the most frequent case is the

integration of the two forms of research at the data analysis and interpretation stages after quantitative data and qualitative data have been collected. In other cases, the analysis may proceed separately, with the comparison done at the interpretation stage. Certainly this decision could be dependent on the purpose of the study, the ease of integration and the cleanness of the data, or values in a particular discipline about the importance of independence in the interpretation of data (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

The fourth parameter is theoretical perspective. During the 1990's, qualitative researchers became much more explicit in articulating theoretical assumptions both in terms of the personal stances of the researchers (e.g., personal history, culture or ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation) and in terms of more formal theoretical perspectives (e.g., feminist theory, critical theory). However, it is only recently that the manner that theoretical perspective informs mixed methods research has been explored. In 1997, Greene and Caracelli discussed the use of a theoretical lens in mixed methods research and referred to a design grounded in ideology, with the intent to advocate for change, as a "transformative design" (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The use of a theoretical lens may be implicit or explicit, though the most frequent approach is to make it explicit, as it often informs the purpose of the study or the research questions that drive the study. It might also specify the participants, how the data collection is designed, and the conclusion of the study (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Making the theoretical lens explicit in the report provides more continuity and focus for the audience and underscores the intent and theoretical consistency.

In this study, I used a mixed methods approach for the research. Mixed methods research provided the flexibility to address the research questions that were central to the study, rather

than have the study shaped by a particular methodology or the inherent limitations in that methodology.

There were two research questions guiding this study: 1) How do adult ELLS in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced? 2) Among adult ELL students assessed by faculty to be successful in academic writing competency, what factors, attitudes, and experiences have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy? In order to address the research questions, the study sought to identify the elements of an adult ELL's experience with academic writing and to explore the nature and role of different experiences in facilitating growth into academic literacy. As noted in Creswell (2003),

[If the purpose is] identifying factors that influence an outcome, ...then a quantitative approach is best...On the other hand, if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done in it, then it merits a qualitative approach...A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (p. 21).

Since the study sought to both identify and explore issues related to the phenomenon of academic literacy and competence in academic writing, a mixed methods design was clearly indicated.

The study was a sequential explanatory study, with the quantitative data in the form of survey data gathered and analyzed first to provide context and to inform the development of the qualitative research. Following the survey and analysis of the survey data, the qualitative data were gathered in a basic interpretive qualitative design. The priority of the study was qualitative, as it was the thick and descriptive detail in experiences of the students that was most

instrumental in illuminating the personal and educational factors that have empowered and supported their development in academic literacy. As the purposes of this study reflected the criteria indicated by Creswell et al. (2003) and Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick (2006), a sequential explanatory design was most appropriate.

Background of the Researcher

In any research study, and particularly one with a qualitative interpretivist element, there are several considerations regarding the background of the researcher that must be acknowledged. It is important to recognize that the researcher's presence and authority in the research environment is never neutral, and that any research methods developed are never perfectly neutral, impartial, or disinterested. I also need to reflect critically on my own biases, interests, and own identity in terms of race, gender, class, and culture (Kirsch, 1992; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

One element of my background that needs to be transparent is that I am a white, middle-aged, middle-class, well-educated woman. My experiences in education have been informed by the elements of privilege that would pertain to those positionality factors. The students selected for the qualitative portion of the study were adults of a range of ages, many of whom came from less privileged backgrounds and represented a diversity of nationality, race, ethnicity, language, and education. Minimizing the potential gaps in communication and understanding that could be occasioned by these differences was important.

Second, my professional teaching practice has been as an English faculty member, and I have taught literally hundreds of students at this community college in basic and college-level writing classes during the course of my professional career. That perspective and experience certainly informed my deep interest in a student's development of competence in academic

writing, but it had the potential to color my response or interpretation of student responses and experiences.

Finally, though I did not explicitly note my current professional role at the college, it is likely that students in both the quantitative component and the qualitative component of the study were aware of my administrative position at the college. Certainly the faculty who were asked to allow surveys to be administered in their classes and invited to refer students for interview were aware of my position. Though it never seemed to be a problem, I had to be prepared to de-fuse any concerns on the part of either students or faculty that would color their participation or responses.

All of these factors, while inevitably a part of my background, had to be acknowledged and managed as I implemented the research.

Participant Selection

With a sequential mixed methods research design plan, using an explanatory QUAN-QUAL research approach, the participant selection was consistent with the research approach. Consequently, a sequential use of representative and purposeful sampling techniques was used.

Representative Sampling

In this sequential mixed methods study, the quantitative portion of the research was done prior to the qualitative portion. The goal of the quantitative portion of the study was to identify pertinent aspects of students' academic writing experiences to answer the first research question: "How do adult ELLs in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced?" The quantitative portion of the study was the distribution of a survey to 385 students enrolled in college-level disciplinary courses at the participating community college. The goal of the sampling associated with this portion of the study was

representativeness, and that was achieved by administering the survey to students at the largest and most diverse campus of a large urban community college. The students sampled were enrolled in a variety of college-level disciplinary courses that require writing as part of the course assessments (research papers, essay exams, case study analysis, argument and analysis, lab reports, etc.). The content areas represented in the survey portion included history, sociology, criminal justice, paralegal studies, government and politics, literature, biology, physical science, psychology, economics, humanities. Some of the classes represented career and/or pre-professional courses, while others were general education courses. The general education courses were chosen because students in those classes would represent students from a wide variety of major and programs. Sections sampled were varied to include day as well as evening sections, as well as sections taught by both full-time and adjunct faculty.

The study was focused on adult English Language Learners, but for ease of distribution, the survey had to be administered to all students in the sections. The 30 surveys included in the data analysis were those completed by students who self-identified as meeting the criteria of being 25 years of age or older and having a language other than English as their first language. This sampling design sought to achieve representativeness of the population of adult ELL students enrolled in college-level courses in this community college (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

The survey included eleven questions. The first eight questions reflected pertinent demographic information such as gender, age, primary or initial language, ethnicity, number of semesters enrolled in college, and employment status and number of hours worked per week. It also included items asking students to identify any ESL and/or basic (developmental) English courses they had taken and the grades received in those courses. The last three questions elicited participants' perceptions of their experiences and attitudes related to academic writing. One

question presented six different statements of confidence relating to various aspects of academic writing and asked the participants to indicate their agreement with those statements on a five-point Likert-type scale. The next question presented four statements of attitude regarding comfort in academic writing situations, two negative and two positive. Participants were asked to indicate any of the statements that they felt had reflected their experiences. The final question provided eight types of personal and institutional resources that have been suggested in the literature as being supportive of the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing. Participants were asked to indicate as many as they felt had been helpful to them and to indicate with a “1” the item that they felt had been most helpful. They also a ninth space within this question in which to indicate any other type of experience or resource that they had found helpful.

Purposeful Sampling

The qualitative portion of the study followed the gathering of the quantitative survey data, and the selection of participants was done as a purposeful sample, using the sampling of special or unique cases (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The goal of this sampling was to find individuals who could provide the richest and most pertinent information and insight related to the purpose of the study (Paisley & Reeves, 2001).

With this as a focus, the three criteria for the participants were 1) that the participants were adult students of twenty-five years of age or older (“in community college” being understood as the context for the research); 2) that they were ELL students (i.e. having a non-English language as their initial or native language); and 3) that they had successfully developed competence in academic writing sufficient to be successful in their curricular work. The first two criteria were quite easily identified, but the third was more difficult to define and identify by

the very nature of the limiters (“competence in academic writing” and “sufficient to be successful in their curricular work”). A purely self-selected pool of participants or a chain selection had the problematical aspect of the accuracy of a student’s self-perception of writing competence. While in some cases, a learner’s perception of his or her own writing competence is accurate, in other cases a learner’s perception of her or her own writing competence is skewed either positively or negatively (Krueger & Dunning, 1999). Since the research question was designed to explore the experiences of students who had successfully developed these attributes (competence in academic writing sufficient to be successful in curricular work) for lower division (community college) purposes, the participants had to be students who met that criterion. Consequently, the participants were drawn from students nominated by the faculty members in a variety of curricular courses. One of the difficulties of this aspect of the selection of participants was that many faculty members who were invited to suggest potential participants did not use writing assignments as part of their course work; consequently, they were unable to nominate prospective participants. However, of the students who were suggested and contacted, eleven were willing to participate in the qualitative portion of the research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Since this study used a mixed methods research design, the data collection and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative sections were conducted with different research instruments, data collection procedures, and analysis of the data.

Quantitative Data

The initial portion of the research study was quantitative, employing an anonymous survey with demographic data and attitudinal data gathered using a variety of item formats. The survey was developed based on surveys used in other studies to assess student attitudes and

experiences in the college-level writing environment (Ahrenroester, 2006; Lunsford 2006). There was demographic data related to age (to identify adult students), native or home language (to identify ELL students), gender, ethnicity, ESL and developmental English courses completed with associated grades (to identify the types of early experiences in the development of academic writing), anticipated programs of study, and employment status and hours. The attitudinal and experiential questions allowed students to rate in a variety of formats their relative comfort, confidence, and fluency with various types of writing situations. It also allowed them to indicate the perception of the factors that they had found to be helpful in their development of academic writing. The survey instrument was developed and piloted with a group of community college students, modified based on feedback, and then administered to the selected sections of the courses as outlined during the months of October, November, and December 2010 and January 2011.

The quantitative data obtained from the survey were based on the responses of the 30 adult ELLS among the 385 surveys. The data was coded using SPSS software, and descriptive statistics were determined in frequency tables.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were developed from semi-structured interviews of the eleven participants selected. Each participant was interviewed twice, the second interview being based on an academic writing artifact brought by the participant. Semi-structured interviews, with open-ended and follow-up questions, were chosen to allow the researcher to pursue avenues of response as they emerged in the conversation. The researcher followed a general interview guide to maintain basic standardization across the interviews; however, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the necessary flexibility in the phrasing, sequence and follow-up of

questions necessary to explore the participant's individual experiences in relation to academic writing (Paisley & Reeves, 2001).

There were two semi-structured interviews done with each participant, both of which were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The first interview lasted approximately one hour, and the interview questions were developed based on the aspects of experience and attitude suggested from the survey. Each participant was asked to bring a piece of academic writing as an artifact for discussion at the second interview.

At the second interview, the participant was asked to share insights and experiences in relation to academic writing and particularly the development of the writing sample. The participant was also sent a copy of the transcript of the first interview and encouraged to make corrections, additions, and clarifications. The transcript of the second interview was also shared with the participant to solicit corrections, additions, and clarifications. The plan for the two interviews allowed for a further exploration of ideas brought up in the first interview, a reflective period between the interviews, and the ability to focus on a written artifact in light of the topics explored in the first interview.

Following the finalization of the two transcripts, a constant comparison analysis was used to analyze the data, with categories of responses identified and integrated into emergent themes, (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Consistent with the methodology of a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design, the data from the two portions of the study was integrated during the interpretation phase, following an analysis of the individual findings.

Introduction of the Participants

Eleven adult community college ELL students agreed to participate in the qualitative portion of the study. They were suggested by community college faculty members teaching college-level curricular or content courses (not ESL, developmental English, or composition courses) as being competent and successful academic writers at the freshman or sophomore level of college. There were seven women and four men between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-eight years of age. They were from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds, were pursuing a variety of majors, were at a range of stages in their academic study, and had been in the United States for a varying number of years. All were employed while attending college and had a range of family and home situations.

Ahmed

Ahmed is a fifty-eight-year old male student originally from Pakistan, planning to graduate in December 2011 with an AAS in Mechanical Engineering Technologies. He grew up speaking Urdu in Pakistan, where he attended secondary school and then left to apprentice as a machinist to support his widowed mother and siblings. He married and had two children before emigrating to the United States in 1986. He worked managing a variety of small businesses with family members in New York, and then moved to York, Pennsylvania to pursue another business opportunity which was unsuccessful. Finding that he needed post-secondary training to find work in the machine-related fields, he pursued a certification through the community college in various industrial technology skills. Finding success at the certificate level, he decided to pursue an associate degree.

Christine

Christine is a forty-six-year old woman from China, with an undergraduate as well as a graduate degree in Comparative Literature from a major university in China. She is the single mother of two children in college. She left China in 1990 to join her husband who had come to the University of Pittsburgh on a student visa to pursue graduate work. She learned English and lived in Pittsburgh for a number of years; after her husband left her and her two children at the conclusion of his graduate work, she pursued a certificate at a local community college to develop some workforce credentials. After a number of years, he moved to the Harrisburg area where her son was attending school. She is pursuing an AA degree in Psychology, with the intent of transferring and finishing her baccalaureate degree and then pursuing graduate work to become a therapist.

Eduard

Eduard is a forty-four-year old man from Haiti, a native speaker of Creole and French. In Haiti, he pursued higher education, completing a teaching degree in mathematics and completing a law degree. He emigrated to the United States before completing his internship to practice law in Haiti, but he is studying paralegal studies as a preparation to transfer for a baccalaureate degree and then apply to law school. He is the single father of two children.

Halima

Halima is a twenty-five-year old woman from Niger who was raised speaking French and two native African languages, along with some English taught in the school system. She came to the United States with her brother to become confidently bilingual and pursue academic study in international relations or international law. She is single and lives with her brother, who is also studying in community college.

Jeannette

Jeannette is a thirty-year-old French Canadian woman from Quebec who has lived in the United States for eight months. She has an undergraduate degree and graduate work in business from two different Canadian universities, and she had a very high-level professional job in Canada in marketing analysis. She is in the United States because of her relationship with a French Canadian hockey player, and her enrollment in community college is for the purpose of improving her English and fulfilling the educational requirements of her visa.

Joseph

Joseph is a thirty-year-old African man from Gabon and Cameroon, who grew up speaking French and two native African languages. Like Halima, he had some exposure to English in his school system. Married, with his wife still living in Africa, he came to the United States in December 2009 for the purpose of learning English and pursuing his education as a math major so that he can return to Gabon and work in the non-profit or public sector in advocacy for the large number of orphans in deep and crushing poverty.

Linda

Linda is a twenty-five-year old Filipina who grew up in the Philippines speaking Tagalog. She was introduced to English briefly as a child when she lived for two years in Kenya before returning to Manila with her father. She continued in secondary education briefly, dropping out and completing her PPED [equivalent of GED] in Tagalog. She came to the United States with some extended family members in 2004. She is the single mother of a four-year old son and works weekends as a CNA. She is in community college to pursue a degree as a registered nurse.

Mona

Mona is a thirty-year-old woman from Germany who grew up and pursued her education and professional career as an ICU nurse in Germany, speaking only German. She came to the United States in October 2009 because her husband (a physician) was offered a position in a major hospital system in the central Pennsylvania area. When she and her husband came to the United States, she spoke only German. She is in community college to learn and strengthen her English and build her confidence in medical English so that she can pass the TOFEL and her nursing certification exam in the United States so that her nursing credentials can be recognized and allow her to practice as nurse.

Pavel

Pavel is a twenty-five year old man from the Ukraine in his second semester of college study. He emigrated with his family in his mid-teens, spent a year acclimating to the culture, and then enrolled in public school at the middle school level and then moved into high school. It was during these years that he learned English in secondary-level ESL. After finishing high school, he worked as a welder (his father's profession) and then decided to come to community college to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice to become a police officer.

Pilar

Pilar is a twenty-eight-year old Latina student, two weeks from graduating with an associate degree in Paralegal Studies. She grew up in the Dominican Republic, with a two-year period when she was a child spent in Pennsylvania living with family before returning to the Dominican Republic. She graduated from high school and briefly attended college in the Dominican Republic before marrying an American man and coming to the United States. She is

divorced with no children, and she was planning to return to the Dominican Republic after her graduation in December 2010.

Zohreh

Zohreh is a fifty-one-year-old Iranian woman who grew up speaking Farsi. She came to the United States with her two children and no knowledge of English because her husband came here for his employment as a nurse. After a divorce, she began to English and came to community college to improve her English and pursue training to be able to support her children. She received a certificate as a phlebotomist, and her current study is in preparation to transfer and become an ESL teacher for children.

These eleven ELL adult community college students participated in the qualitative portion of this study from December 2010 through February 2011. They each came for two hour-long interviews with the researcher, bringing samples of their writing for discussion as part of the second interview.

Verification Strategies

Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches have criteria established within the academic community to ensure that research is conducted with an eye to trustworthiness and that the findings are credible (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Quantitative research, grounded in a positivist perspective, has long addressed issues of validity and reliability in verifying the data and the findings. Qualitative research, grounded in a constructivist perspective, has been more oriented to issues of confirmability, credibility, and transferability to support the data and findings. As indicated in Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006), the construct for verification in mixed methods research, grounded in a pragmatic perspective, is still developing and is not yet

well established. Consequently, this mixed methods study addressed the verification of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study separately.

Quantitative Verification Strategies

The primary verification elements in quantitative research are validity and reliability. Reliability refers to the extent that the findings would be the same if the study were to be replicated (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Validity refers to the extent to which the study is measuring what it is intended to measure (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The way that this study addresses these two criteria is important to its strength and usefulness.

In the absence of a generally agreed-upon instrument that addresses the particular issues pertinent to this study, the researcher developed a survey adapted from surveys used in similar studies (Ahrenhoerster, 2006; Fallon, Lahar, & Susman, 2009;). The survey was administered to 385 students in 24 sections of college-level content courses in a range of academic disciplines at the largest campus of an urban central Pennsylvania community college. The total number of participants in the survey portion of the study included many students who did not meet the criteria stipulated for the research; consequently, out of the 385 surveys completed, only 30 were completed by students meeting the criteria for the study.

The sections selected for the survey distribution were morning, afternoon, and evening sections and included sections taught by both adjunct and full-time faculty. The academic content areas were drawn from four of the six curricular divisions at the community college. The survey was piloted during the summer of 2010, with necessary revisions made to the format and phrasing of survey items. It is felt that the number and criteria for the selection of survey participants provided an appropriate sampling of the population of community college students

enrolled in college-level content courses, and this will contribute to both the reliability and validity of the quantitative component of the study.

Qualitative Verification Strategies

Qualitative research approaches also address the issue of the trustworthiness of the data and findings of a study, but rather than considering reliability and validity (characteristics of quantitative research), they consider the four primary criteria of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Confirmability, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the extent to which the interpretations of the data are grounded in the data rather than the researcher's personal construction. Typically, the way confirmability is determined is the use of an audit trail, the tracking of all materials, communications, data, and records related to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Credibility is the congruence between the qualitative data and the researcher's interpretations of the data. Typically, credibility is rooted in member checks, sharing with participants the data collected and the interpretations to assess the participants' agreement that the interpretations are reflective of the data. Triangulation is another tool for establishing credibility, the use of multiple sources of data to confirm findings (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In this study, the predominant method for achieving triangulation will be the use of the survey to gather data on attitudes and experiences in academic writing as well as the interviews, which will deal with attitudes and experiences in academic writing (Paton, 2002).

Dependability is a concept in qualitative research, parallel to the concept of reliability in quantitative research, i.e. the degree to which findings would be confirmed if the study were replicated (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Certainly, this is a challenging expectation in

qualitative research, because of the individual nature of human perspectives, framed by specific time and context. However, the audit trail and triangulation should be helpful in establishing this criterion (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Finally, transferability is a criterion of the strength and usefulness of qualitative research. It refers to the extent to which the findings and conclusions of a study could reasonably be applied to another context or situation. The purposeful sample of interview participants chosen by a specific recommendation rubric is one tool in establishing transferability, as the rubric can signal the elements used to identify the participants and reflect the contexts of the participants' experiences. Additionally, the thick and descriptive data characteristic of qualitative data further established the specific time, place, and contexts for the participants' responses, establishing a frame for drawing conclusions and generalizing to whatever extent is possible.

Ethics and IRB Compliance

This study was conducted in compliance with the guidelines established by The Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections, beginning with the necessary approvals related to the IRB requirements. For the quantitative component of the study, a script was read in each class prior to the distribution of the survey. Each participant received a copy of the implied informed consent document from The Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections. The survey was anonymous, and the resulting data was entered into SPSS by the researcher. Print copies of the surveys were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research study.

For the qualitative component of the study, informed consent was obtained from each interview participant, stipulating that the interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed, that anonymity would be maintained, and that participation was completely voluntary. The

researcher also explained how the data would be analyzed and that the participant would have the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews. Also anonymity of the participants within the study was explained, with all identifiable features of the participants removed. The audio-recordings, transcripts, and analysis of emergent themes are kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office, with the office locked when the researcher is not present.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to identify and explore how adult ELLs at community college negotiate the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing. As outlined in chapter three, the methodology for the research was a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. A sequential explanatory mixed methods design has two distinct phases: the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative data serve to build on and explain the findings of the quantitative data (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Creswell et al, 2003). The design of this research study used quantitative survey data gathered and analyzed during November and December 2010 and early January 2011 prior to the collection of the qualitative data developed using a basic interpretive qualitative design and gathered during late January and February 2011.

The research was done to address two research questions. The first was specifically oriented to the nature of quantitative or survey data, while the second was more fully explored by the qualitative data.

1. How do adult ELLs in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced?
2. Among adult ELLs assessed by faculty to be successful in academic writing competency, what factors, attitudes, and experiences have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy?

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data was developed from a survey of 11 questions administered between November 2010 and February 2011. The survey was administered to 20 sections of college-level

courses in a variety of disciplines (385 surveys) as well as a small number of participants from a purposeful sample of adult ELLs based on faculty referrals and snowball referrals (12 surveys). The course sections surveyed included morning, afternoon, and evening courses; courses taught by both full-time and adjunct faculty; and courses that were both General Education and major-specific. At the invitation of the faculty member, the researcher came to the classes and administered the survey. The additional survey participants were contacted based on referrals by the faculty whose classes were surveyed, knowing that adult ELLs are a somewhat difficult population to access in good numbers. Additionally, a few adult ELL students who did the survey indicated they had friends who had heard of the survey and wanted to participate. Of these 385 surveys administered in the classrooms and the 12 additional surveys done by volunteers, 30 were completed by adult students who self-identified as non-native speakers of English. It is those 30 surveys were analyzed using frequency analysis to gather general descriptive data on this population.

Demographic Data

The first 8 questions elicited the following demographic data about the adult ELL students.

Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

In terms of gender, 66.7% (20) were women, while 33.3 % (10) were men, shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Gender

Gender	Percent
Women	66.7% (20)
Men	33.3% (10)

As indicated in Table 2, of the 30 participants, 76.7% (23) were in the age range 25-40 years old; 23.3% (7) were in the age range 41 to 50 years old.

Table 2

Participant Age Ranges

Age Range	Percent
25-40 years old	76.7% (23)
41-50 years old	23.3% (7)

On the variable of ethnicity (see Table 3), 29 participants responded to the question. Twenty-four percent (7) self-identified as white/Caucasian; 31% (9) self-identified as Black/African-American; 31% (9) indicated they were Hispanic/Latino; 10.3% (3) were Asian/Asian-American; 3.4% (1 participant) self-identified as “other,” with no further specification of ethnic origin.

Table 3

Participant Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percent
Black/African-American	31.0% (9)
Hispanic/Latino	31.0% (9)
White/Caucasian	24.1% (7)
Asian/Asian-American	10.3% (3)
Other	3.4% (1)

First Language

All 30 participants responded to the open-ended question to identify their first language. Table 4 indicates which languages were identified by participants as their first language.

Table 4

Participant First Language

Language	Percent
Portuguese	20.0% (6)
Spanish	13.3% (4)
French	13.3% (4)
French/Creole	10.0% (3)
German	6.7% (2)
Arabic	3.3% (1)
Farsi	3.3% (1)
Ghanaian	3.3% (1)
Hausa	3.3% (1)
Latvian	3.3% (1)
Polish	3.3% (1)
Russian	3.3% (1)
Thai	3.3% (1)
Ukranian	3.3% (1)
Urdu	3.3% (1)
Yoruba	3.3% (1)

Number of Semesters Enrolled in College

As shown in Table 5, of the 30 survey participants, 29 responded to the open-ended question and indicated the number of semesters enrolled in college (counting the semester during which they took the survey). Of the 29 respondents, 24.1% (7) indicated they were in the 3rd semester of college study, while 20.7% (6) reported they were in the 4th semester of study. Other responses included 13.8% (4) who were in the 1st semester of study, 10.3% (3) who were in the second semester of study, 6.9% (2) who were in the 6th semester, 6.9% (2) who were in the 8th semester of study, and 3.4% (1) student who reported being in each of the following semesters: 5th, 9th, 12th, 14th, and 15th.

Table 5

Participant Semesters Enrolled in College

Semesters Enrolled	Percent
First semester	13.8% (4)
Second semester	10.3% (3)
Third semester	24.1% (7)
Fourth semester	20.7% (6)
Fifth semester	3.4% (1)
Sixth semester	6.9% (2)
Eighth semester	6.9% (2)
Ninth semester	3.4% (1)
Twelfth semester	3.4% (1)
Fourteenth semester	3.4% (1)
Fifteenth semester	3.4% (1)

ESL and Developmental English Classes Taken

Tables 6 and 7 document the ESL and developmental English classes taken by the participants. Of the 30 adult ELL respondents 40.0% (12) had taken at least one English as a Second Language (ESL) course in college. Only 3.3% (1) had taken English 026 (the lowest or entry level of ESL coursework at the institution), 6.7% (2) had taken English 027 (the English 026 student and another whose placement testing results led to a placement in English 027, the second level of ESL study); 16.7% (5) had taken English 028 (the third level of ESL study), and 36.7% (11) had taken English 029 (the highest level of ESL before transition into regular instruction in developmental reading and writing). One student (3.3%) indicated taking a different ESL course, with no specificity about what that course might have been.

Table 6

Participant Experience in ESL Classes

ESL Classes	Percent
At least one class	40.0% (12)
English 026	3.3% (1)
English 027	6.7% (2)
English 028	16.7% (5)
English 029	36.7% (11)
Other	3.3% (1)

Of the respondents taking developmental English, 30% (10) had taken or were currently taking a developmental reading class, and 56.6 % (17) of the respondents had taken at least one developmental writing class.

Table 7.

Participant Enrollment in Developmental English (Developmental Reading and/or Writing)

Developmental Course	Percent
Reading	76.7% (23)
Writing	23.3% (7)

Educational Goals and Anticipated Fields of Study

Tables 8 and 9 show the educational goals and anticipated fields of study indicated by the survey participants. Of the 30 respondents, 40% (12) anticipated completing the associate degree and entering the workforce. Of the rest, 30% (9) anticipated completing the associate degree and transferring to a four-year institution, while 26.7% (8) were in college for personal enrichment, and 3.3% (1) respondent was taking coursework to upgrade current job skills.

Table 8

Participant Educational Goals

Goal	Percent
Complete associate degree, then enter the workforce	40.0% (12)
Complete associate degree, then transfer to a four-year institution	30.0% (9)
Personal enrichment	26.7% (8)
Upgrade current job skills	3.3% (1)

Of the 40% (12) respondents who indicated an anticipated field of study in an open-ended response field, 6 anticipated pursuing study in business management, 4 anticipated pursuing study in health careers (nursing, dental hygienist), and 1 student each anticipated pursuing law, information technology, and humanities education. Additionally, 1 student indicated the purpose of college-level study was to remain qualified for a visa.

Table 9

Participant Anticipated Field of Study

Field	Percent
Indicated anticipated field of study	40.0% (16)
Business management	25.0% (4)
Health careers (nursing, dental hygiene)	25.0% (4)
Hospitality/hotel management	12.5% (2)
Law	6.3% (1)
Information technology	6.3% (1)
Humanities education	6.3% (1)
UPR	6.3% (1)
Penn State—Harrisburg	6.3% (1)
Remain qualified for a visa	6.3% (1)

Employment

Of the 30 respondents, a little more than half (53.3% or 16 respondents) were employed, while 46.7% or 14 respondents were not employed. Of the 16 who were employed, 37.5% (6) were employed up to 20 hours a week, 18.8% (3) worked between 21 and 35 hours a week, and 43.8% (7) worked over 35 hours a week. (See Table 10)

Table 10

Participant Employment

Employment Hours per Week	Percent
Employed	53.3% (16)
Up to 20 hours	37.5% (6)
21-35 hours	18.8% (3)
Over 35 hours	43.8% (7)

Attitudes and Experiences in Academic Writing

The final three questions of the survey focused on attitudes and experiences that students had related to academic writing or “writing for your college classes.”

Confidence in Academic Writing Situations

The first of these questions included a series of 6 positive statements about confidence in various writing tasks or elements (research, essay exams, focus, organization, development, Standard English usage, etc.). The level of confidence in each area was signaled on a Likert-type scale, with 5 choices: “all the time,” “usually,” “sometimes,” “seldom,” and “never.”

In reference to confidence in being able to understand the expectations of a writing assignment, Table 11 shows that 86.6% (26) reported “all the time” or “usually.” In reference to confidence in being able to do well in writing assignments, 73.4% (22) reported “all the time” or

“usually,” while 26.7% (8) reported “sometimes.” In reference to knowledge of gathering and documenting researched information, 96.6% (29) reported being confident “all the time” or “usually.” In regard to feeling confident about being able to communicate understanding of content, 86.7% (26) reported being confident “all of the time” or “usually.” When asked about confidence in their ability to organize, focus, and develop ideas, 90% (27) of the respondents felt confident “all of the time” or “usually.” Finally, when asked about confidence in their use of Standard English (grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling), again, 70% (21) felt confident “all of the time” or “usually,” while 26.7% (8) felt confident “sometimes,” and 3.3% (1) noted feeling confident “seldom.”

Table 11

Participant Confidence in Academic Writing Situations

Situation	All the time	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom/never
I understand writing assignments.	53.3% (16)	33.3% (10)	10.0% (3)	3.3% (1)
I can do well in writing assignments.	36.7% (11)	36.7% (11)	26.7% (8)	--
I can gather, use and document information.	63.3% (19)	33.3% (10)	3.3% (1)	--
I can communicate my understanding.	36.7% (11)	50.0% (15)	13.3% (4)	--
I can focus, organize, and develop ideas.	43.3% (13)	46.7% (14)	10.0% (3)	--
I can use standard English in my writing.	16.7% (5)	53.3% (16)	26.7% (8)	3.3% (1)

Development of Academic Writing

The next survey item gave students four statements relating to their perceptions of their development as writers, two statements expressing doubt about fitting in or confusion about expectations and two statements expressing confidence in current abilities. Table 12 documents that breakdown of the participant responses. They were to indicate as many statements as they felt applied to them. For the first statement, “When I first came to college and had writing assignments, I sometimes didn’t think I would fit in and be able to complete them the right way,” 56.7% (17) reported having felt that way. For second statement, “I often have writing situations or assignments that are confusing and discouraging,” 30% (9) of the respondents indicated feeling that way. For the next statement, “I have learned how to plan and approach most writing assignments fairly well,” 66.7% (20) of the respondents indicated feeling that way. For the final statement, “I’ve learned how to write essay exams pretty successfully,” 63.3% (19) reported agreement.

Table 12

Participant Development as Academic Writers

Attitude	Percent
I sometimes didn’t think I would fit in and be able to complete writing assignments the right way.	56.7% (17)
I often have writing situations or assignments that are confusing or discouraging.	30.0% (9)
I’ve learned how to plan and approach writing assignments pretty well.	66.7% (20)
I’ve learned how to write essay exams pretty successfully.	63.3% (19)

Factors Contributing to Development as a College Writer

The final question of the survey listed 8 types of activities often referenced in the literature as being supportive in the development of academic writing, with an open-ended option for “other.” Respondents were asked to check as many as they felt were applicable and to indicate with a “1” the experience that was most helpful. Very few students, however, actually differentiated a most helpful experience. The experiences listed were high school English class, college English classes (developmental reading or composition), working with a college writing tutor in the writing center, working with someone else outside of class, working with peers or classmates during class, instruction in college classes other than English classes, simply doing a lot of reading, and simply doing a lot of writing. Table 13 shows the number of responses and percentage of responses for each of the supportive or facilitative experiences. The most frequently checked experience was “simply doing a lot of reading” (76.7% or 23 respondents), followed by college English classes (66.7% or 20 respondents), and then working with peers or classmates during class (50% or 15 respondents). Receiving instruction on writing in classes other than English classes was indicated by 46.7% (14) participants, while “simply doing a lot of writing” was indicated by 43.3% (13) respondents. Working with a writing tutor in the learning center was noted as being helpful for 37.5% (11) of the respondents. Finally, working with someone outside of class (other than a writing center tutor) and preparation from high school English were both indicated as helpful for 33.3% (10) of the participants. Listed by respondents as “other” experiences that were helpful in their development of academic writing were “motivation—to want to learn,” “playing soccer,” “writing poetry,” and “taking ESL and English 051,” “staying with a host family and sharing ideas,” and “community volunteer work that I have done for the community for the past 2 years as well as dental hygiene clinical studies.”

Table 13

Participant Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Development as Academic Writers

Experience	Percent
High school English class	33.3% (10)
College English reading or composition class(es)	66.7% (20)
Working with a writing tutor in the college learning center	36.7% (11)
Working with someone else outside of class or outside of the writing center	33.3% (10)
Working with other students during class (sharing ideas, peer review, etc.)	50.0% (15)
Instruction and guidance in college classes other than English classes	46.7% (14)
Simply doing a lot of reading	76.7% (23)
Simply doing a lot of writing in various college classes	43.3% (13)
Other experiences (Motivation/want to learn, host family, community volunteer, writing poetry, ESL and English 051)	16.5% (5)

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The frequency analysis of survey data suggests several dimensions or variables that describe the adult ELL population: two-thirds of the participants were women; 76.7% are between the ages of 25 and 40 years old; an equal number of respondents (30% or 9) identify themselves as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino, with 23.3% (7) consider themselves white or Caucasian, and 10% (3) self-identify as Asian-American. In first languages, one-third of the students (10) speak either Spanish or Portuguese, followed in numbers by French and French/Creole (7) In terms of their progress through their educations, two-thirds of them (66.6%

or 20 participants) were relatively early in their college careers (in the first four semesters of college study). Most (70%) were anticipating completing an associate degree, and 10 of the 14 students who had decided on a major were pursuing either health careers or business management. Over half of the participants (53.3% or 16) had taken developmental writing. Slightly more than half of the participants (53.3%) were employed.

Most of the students feel relatively confident in the five areas of academic writing competencies indicated, with confidence in use of Standard English having the lowest level of confidence among the five areas. While 56.7% (17) of the participants reported initially feeling that they wouldn't fit in to college or be able to complete writing assignments well, most of them (66.7% and 63.3%) indicate that they have learned how to approach writing assignments and write essay exams fairly well. Finally, in terms of the factors that the participants indicated as helpful in their development of academic writing, two experiences were indicated by over half of the participants: "simply doing a lot of reading" (76.7%) and "college reading or composition classes" (66.7%).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data was gathered from a basic interpretive qualitative design, using two semi-structured interviews with each of the eleven participants, along with academic writing artifacts from each of the participants. The hour-long interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher to provide the data for this portion of the study. The data were analyzed using a systematic and detailed analysis using a constant comparative method. The participants' experiences are presented and supported with their own words, which have not been edited for grammar or syntax. Every effort has been made to convey the participants' emotions as they shaped the intent of the words.

Table 14 below summarizes the profiles of the eleven interview participants.

Table 14

Interview Participant Profiles

Name	Age	Country of Origin	First Language	Course of Study
Ahmed	58	Pakistan	Urdu	Mechanical Engineering Tech.
Christine	46	China	Mandarin	Psychology
Eduard	44	Haiti	Creole, French	Paralegal Studies/Pre-law
Halima	25	Niger	French, Hausa, Zarma	International Business
Jeannette	31	Canada	French	Personal/ESL
Joseph	30	Gabon	French, Bapounou, Fan	Mathematics
Linda	25	Philippines	Tagalog	Pre-nursing
Mona	30	Germany	German	Nursing
Pavel	25	Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian	Criminal Justice
Pilar	28	Dominican Rep.	Spanish	Paralegal Studies
Zohreh	51	Iran	Farsi	Secondary Education

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts fall into four broad categories: early influences on language and educational aspirations; transition into U.S. higher education—challenges and adjustments; challenges in the development of academic writing; and support for the development of academic writing competencies and confidence.

Early Influences on Language and Educational Aspirations

In order to explore the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated these adult ELL students' development of academic literacy and specifically academic writing, the interviews began with their recollections of their early years, and specifically the experiences that shaped their language and educational attitudes.

Early Language Experiences

All of the participants were raised in other countries, speaking a variety of languages and learning English at different points in their lives. Since comfort and confidence with English is a central element of the development of competence in academic writing in English, their family contexts, their language backgrounds, and their pathways to learning English are significant influences that have shaped that comfort and confidence.

Many of the participants had some exposure to English in their childhood or teenage years in their native countries. Most of the participants learned very preliminary English as teenagers, typically in their secondary educational systems, though some had more extensive background in English. Ahmed commented that although Urdu was his family language, English was spoken widely in many contexts when he was growing up in Pakistan. He remembered,

In the schools and college, English is a compulsory subject, so I learned all English in Pakistan before I come here. In high school, you could take classes in Urdu or in English. I took in English, especially in math or physics. So I used English, and I feel comfortable in English. Everybody knows English and their own language too; English is for all jobs and all business.

For other participants, English was not a primary language in their native cultures, but it was a part of their secondary educational experiences. For example, Halima, who grew up speaking French and two native African languages (Hausa and Zarma) indicated that studying English was a part of her Baccalaureate 1 preparation in Niger, noting “I took English for two years when I got my Bac (Baccalaureate) 1 diploma before I came to America.” Similarly, Joseph, who grew up speaking French and two African languages (Bapounou and Fan) in Gabon, noted that limited English was part of the education in high school. He stated, “In high school we

sometimes studied some basics [in English]...just a little bit, how to say ‘Hi,’ ‘Good morning, what is your name?’ So it was very basic.” Similarly, Jeannette recalled that growing up in Quebec she had basic English exposure in high school but with limited efficacy:

We watched some television in English and had some basic, basic classes in English....It was maybe two times a week, and I wasn’t motivated. I don’t have any friends who speak English, so I never had the opportunity to practice.

She expressed also regret that she had not learned English in a more aggressive way as a child, comparing herself to her father, who is very comfortably bilingual. She stated, “I think that when he was very young he was writing a lot [in English] and learned all the grammar and all the punctuation and idiomatic expressions. So he said that is why today he is so good.” Even her parents reflected regret that English was not more a part of her early life: “My parents, they were not speaking English at home, and this is something I think that did not help me. Even today, my mother says, ‘Jeannette, I feel ashamed that I never taught you anything because I didn’t know that English would have become so important.’”

Another participant, Eduard, who was raised speaking Creole and French in Haiti, was taught English as regular part of the educational system, with students having to study both English and Spanish in all the years but choosing one for more extensive study and emphasis in secondary school. In addition, he augmented his “school English” with outside strategies. He explained.

We start learning English from the 6th grade....I remember it now, my first class...the first thing they started was the verb ‘to be’ and then they give you the pronoun ‘he’ ‘she.’ But me, I was always being a person who tends to listen to American music, to English music, which give you the sounds all the time....I brought my own books to read [in

English class]. Some of us tried to compete in English, to see who was better. We learned the slang. That's how I got my English....I read it, I listened to it, I did the slang, I did the conversation.

For other participants, English wasn't a part of their early lives until they moved into a country or culture that was more grounded in English. Pavel spoke no English until his family moved to central Pennsylvania, and he had ESL classes and tutoring support from middle school through high school. Similarly, Linda had a family situation that took her to Kenya for several years where English became part of her life. She reflected, "My English—actually because we lived in Africa (Kenya) back and forth for seven years—it was a big thing when it comes to my English because that's where I learned how to speak." Similarly, Pilar's family moved for a few years to central Pennsylvania, and Pilar learned English in the public school system. She indicated,

I learned English when I was—I started to learn English, I'm still learning English—when I was 10. My mother and my brother and sister and I moved up here, and I did 4th and 5th grade. I remember the first months when I absolutely didn't know anything that was going on. I had to repeat the 4th grade because I didn't know English at the time, and I had an [ESL] tutor in the language arts class. That's how I learned English. In 5th grade, I didn't want a tutor—I was doing good enough. There was only three families in [the town she lived in] that spoke Spanish, so I got very used to English.

However, like Eduard, she augmented that school experience with other English exposure. "I only did 4th and 5th grade, and then we moved back to the Dominican Republic, and then *Dawson's Creek* helped me a lot with learning English. Thankfully we had American cable, and I used to watch it and hear some weird word and go look it up on the internet. I stretched my

vocabulary.” She also used English as a private language: “I remember that as a kid, after I learned English, I would write diaries and journal. I would write them in English so that nobody could understand them.”

Early Encouragement for Education

One of the common denominators in the early influences of most of the participants was support for education.

In the early experience of most of the participants, their families inculcated very early, by principle or example, the importance of education. For example, Halima’s parents are well-educated, and she grew up in an environment that explicitly and implicitly valued education. She noted,

My mom is a doctor; she works for the World Health organization. And my dad is an engineer, and he works in the Ministry of Engineer in Niger. My parents always tell me that education is always the best, the education is the only thing that makes you something one day. That without education, you are really nothing. So as I’m growing up, I started seeing that what they are saying is really true, that we can only judge people sometimes by their education, and while I’m growing, I’m starting to be more interested and being serious about what I am doing.

Similarly, for Pilar, attending education and the goal of college also had its roots in family expectations. She explained, “My sister has a master’s degree, and my younger brother just got a scholarship to Susquehanna University. Education is just an expectation in my family...it’s a must in my family. You have to go to school.”

Pavel did not have the example of education in his family, but he did have strong encouragement through his early years. Speaking of his parents, he said,

They always told me to get education. When they were in the Ukraine, they don't have so much opportunity to get so much education. My mom finished 10th grade, and that's it because that was the highest in high school. They considered 10th grade, "that's it" and you're out. My dad, he finished high school, went to army, came back and learned how to be a welder, and that's it—that's all he got. He wanted to go father, but that's all you can do. So they encouraged me to get education because with education you have a lot more in life, I guess, and they always pushed me hard, hard—"study that" "study that...that...that" That's what they did. They were saying, 'You don't want to end up like me. Go to college and get some education.'"

Like Pavel, Ahmed did not come from an environment that allowed for higher education, in his case because of financial exigency and the death of his father, leaving a widow with seven children. However, he remembered the influence of his widowed mother, saying, "She never told us to get to this job or to this field. [But] she always asked us to go to school and go to college, to study and study at home. She always encouraged us and help us." He reflected proudly on the impact of that encouragement, stating,

My oldest sister, she is in education and science—a teacher in the school. My older brother, he just did high school. Me, I did the high school, and I did some certifications and diploma there for my job. And then my younger brother, he's an engineer in mechanical engineering. Then after him, my sister is Master's in Library Science. My other brother is a pharmacist, and my other young brother, he just graduated from college in biology.

Like many other participants, Joseph had encouragement from his family, including his parents and his wife, but his commitment to education is also rooted in personal goals.

Yeah, my father and my sister and brothers, they think education is very important and that the right person can get education and do a lot of good. It is better for me to keep going to school because it's very important for my country. They would need somebody like me. I grew up poor, so I know the reality of the country. My wife and I started thinking about the way we could help in the future, and it's our goal to do something to help the poor, the orphans. I'm living only for that, and I think I'll be able to do that. I learned English because I need to have...to be able to understand what they say in class so I can get my education."

Joseph's personal drive to be successful in getting his education in order to contribute in his country is a fundamental theme in his life. Speaking of the decision he and his wife made for him to leave Gabon and come to the United States to get an education, he recalled:

It was very hard, very hard to leave my wife back home. Yeah, that was very, very hard. My wife and I realized that I had to, even though it wasn't easy. Every day without her is very long. You know, I could play soccer in my country and improve, but it's not the same with education.

In addition to the good he hopes to accomplish returning to his country with an education, he sees the power of his own example for the children of his country. "I want to be a good model, so I need a good education. I will let them know that education is the best way to succeed in his life. The best thing you can have and use is education."

Transition into U.S. Higher Education—Determination in Negotiating Challenges

For all the participants, the transition into U.S. higher education was characterized by a variety of personal as well as linguistic and academic challenges and adjustments.

Personal Crises Leading to Pursuit of Higher Education in the U.S.

For several of the participants, personal crises set up the situations that led them to enroll in college. These personal crises created desperate life situations, and the participants responded by assertively pursuing higher education as a path to a more secure life for themselves and their families; they also used the personal crises as drivers for an exceptional level of determination to learn English and succeed in academic study. This determination enabled them to persevere and excel, and it shaped their academic transitions and plans in the pursuit of higher education.

Pilar, who had some prior higher education experience as an art student in the Dominican Republic, came to the U.S. as an exchange student and then married an American man. She remembered the frustration of her years away from her education, saying, “I left school to be a wife. And after a while, that starts to make you feel, ‘Oh my god, I really need to get back to what I was doing with my life.’” After a short time, Pilar and her husband divorced, leaving her with an immediate need to return to higher education to prepare for a career. Her return to higher education, motivated by the need to develop a career path, was shaped by some specific life experiences in during her marriage. During her years of “just being a wife” and looking for an opportunity to return to college, she had helped her husband with legal issues. She stated,

I did *pro se* work, which means that you go to court on your own. I helped my ex-husband for custody and stuff like that of his daughter. I went to court on my own and drew up the papers myself. I filed it. His ex-wife had a lawyer, and his mom was also involved in the custody, and she had a lawyer. We didn’t have a lawyer. Whenever we would get served with papers, I would study it, look at it, and tear it apart, and then based on what they wrote, I’d try it myself and I did it. And I got him custody of his kids. So I

did it right and it didn't get contested. Of all the complaints that I filed, there was nothing wrong with them.

With this successful and confidence-building experience, after the divorce, Pilar recognized that she had found a field that she had an aptitude for and entered community college to pursue a degree in paralegal studies.

Similarly, Christine's enrollment in U.S. higher education was also occasioned by a personal crisis but it was complicated by more complex linguistic and academic challenges. In 1991, Christine and her infant daughter traveled from China to join her husband in Pittsburgh where he had enrolled in a graduate program in math and computer science. In her graduate work in China, she had studied English and in fact had a high-paying corporate job because of her ability to work in both English and Chinese. However, after moving to Pittsburgh, she found that her level of English was not adequate for her to be functional. She remembered,

My oral speaking...I was very poor. Plus, I was shy. Because in China you learn from the book, and practice, practice, practice. But nobody practices in the speaking with you. So actually, I was shy to speak. For the first three years, I did not speak much. I was a housewife. I did not put myself in public; I did not put myself in the environment except that I was involved with the Chinese church.

She also experienced a significant social and psychological struggle in the transition from her identity in China to that of a relatively submissive and faceless housewife, helpless in an English-speaking culture.

It was a huge self-esteem dropping. I compare other people—I was at the peak. [In China] we had 152 students getting a BA; only 3 of us got into graduate school. I was an outstanding student. And I was the one, very ambitious and very goal-oriented.

After ten years of supporting her husband through several graduate degrees and raising two children, Christine was shocked when her husband gave her divorce papers after his last day of class. This personal crisis led to a period of struggle and pain. She remembered this period, saying,

I didn't know what was coming; I was blind; I was blindsided. It was overwhelming to me because at that point, I was at the very bottom. I had not emotional support or stability. I was struggling so bad. I did not know where to stay. I could not pay my rent because he disappeared. I had to stay and the children stay in an attic. My friends' restaurant and there's no window. The three months in summer—June, July, August, the three hottest months—we stay in attic and no window. He disappeared, and I could not pay the rent. That was a very low point in my life.

What Christine took from this crisis was a resolve to pursue education to support herself and her children, and her experience shaped her choices. She explained, “I could not understand a person spending 13 years...married 13 years. This life experience, it changed my interest. I wanted to study people. I wanted to study psychology.”

The challenges inherent in a plan to go to college to pursue a completely different field were great in her situation.

I managed to try and stand up. I could not even think of trying to go to university. I wanted to start from something that requires very little. I said that I'm going to go to community college. It was a big decision already for me to go back to school because I was kind of depressed and very little speaking English and no money and no one to help me and two children depend on me. So I started community college in Pittsburgh, and in year and a half, I got a Drug and Alcohol Counseling certification.

Christine's shattering personal crisis motivated her decision to enter U.S. higher education and her academic focus, as well as her necessity to develop more competence in functional and academic English.

Zohreh is another of the participants whose academic decisions and directions were set in motion by personal crises. She was raised in Tehran, where it was infrequent, though possible, for women to enroll in higher education. In Zohreh's situation, despite her desire to attend college, she was unable to be accepted because of a brief association with a communist organization and because she was not an observant Muslim. She worked in a hospital and met and married her husband, who was a nurse. In 2005, he took a position in a hospital in central Pennsylvania, and the family re-located. Arriving in Pennsylvania, Zohreh stayed at home, largely because she spoke no English. She noted, "When I talked to him [her husband] that I wanted to go to college and learn English, he said, 'No, you are old, and you can't learn English. Don't waste your time.'" Eventually she found free English classes sponsored by the community. She explained, "So I just took these classes three days a week for one hour. And after three months, my teacher told me 'Zohreh, you should move to high level because these classes is not for you. You can go to college.'"

Within a year of moving here, Zohreh discovered that her husband had been unfaithful over a period of years and was continuing a pattern of being physically abusive. One evening, after being beaten and calling 911, Zohreh got a protection from abuse order and started divorce proceedings. Speaking of that personal crisis and the resulting divorce, she remembered her shift in outlook and concern for her children.

I said, 'it's time,' and I can do something about it because here is different. I can have my children; I can have my future. I don't want to live as a slave—I would say a slave.

And I wanted to change my life. Not just for myself, but for my children. I don't want my son or my daughter to see—especially I don't want my daughter to see her mother just stay home and get beat by her father and don't say anything. What does that say to my daughter if someday she wants to marry a man? So everything just came to my mind...my son wants to learn from his father to beat his wife? So it wasn't just me...I have two children.

Part of the challenge of this experience was her helplessness with her limited English. Recalling the difficulties she faced, she recalled,

It happened that when I called 911, the first thing was that I couldn't talk to police and explain what happened to me. And I asked my son to explain. And that was the moment that I realized, 'How can I explain if I want to talk to police?' Fortunately, there was an Iranian police in the police stations, and they just told, 'Hold on,' and I hold the phone, and after two or three minutes, somebody talked to me in Farsi. So I realized that I need to learn English; I need to talk English. I can't ask my son or my daughter to just talk for me. I don't want they know everything I wanted to explain to judge or to people or to my friends; they shouldn't have to do that. So when the police came to my home, I asked my son to explain everything to the policeman. And my son, he was crying when he was explaining to the police.

As soon as she separated from her husband, Zohreh started attending community college and enrolled in ESL classes as a preparation to pursuing a certificate that would prepare her for a career to support her children. She took only two classes a semester so that she could continue to take care of her children, but because of her stressful life situation, she pursued her study with an almost desperate level of determination to succeed. Within two years, she had completed a

certificate as a phlebotomist as an immediate career, with a long-term goal to pursue an education degree as an ESL teacher of children. The devastating personal crisis became a catalyst to impel Zohreh into learning English and pursuing college studies. It also defined her work ethic and vision that sustained her through a challenging curriculum.

Language and Lifestyle Transitions into College

For a number of other participants, early experiences in academic life were not characterized by painful personal crises, but were nonetheless shaped by significant language and lifestyle challenges that affected their transitions into academic study.

Mona found that her limited English affected her social life as well as her academic plans.

[Coming to the U.S. because of her husband's employment change] was very hard and difficult without English. I could say 'hello,' 'how are you?' but if the other person answers me 'I'm fine,' then.....nothing. It is terrible to live in a country and I cannot speak the language. So I hate the situation! I'm a very communicative person, and I hate when I cannot communicate with someone because I can't find the right words and the right way fast enough. Every time I go out with [husband] and his colleagues, everyone talks and I sit there [gestures being completely confused]. When Americans speak with each other, there was no way of understanding for me....no way. I was thinking about what they said, and 'whfft...' they've moved forward. And I think, 'Can we go back?'

Referring her initial course work in ESL and English 003 (basic reading course that is not specifically for ESL students), Mona found great academic challenges. "In the first few weeks, I was overwhelmed. It was so hard, so hard. It was so much different, and it was a lot of reading. I took the quiz [referencing the reading placement test] because I wanted to go to 002, but I take

the test and the test said, 'ok you can go to 003.' And I said, 'ouch!' It was so, so hard. But it helps and it works. And I really wanted to learn English.”

Like Mona, Jeannette found that after coming to the U.S. and anticipating taking courses at community college, her struggles with English worried her. “

Last year I was in Europe, so I began to learn English there a little bit, but learning another language is so, so hard. Everybody was from other countries and everybody had an accent. I read a lot in English, and I watched tv a lot. But when I came here, I noticed that a lot of people were not able to understand me very well. I am an international student, and I'm not able to find a job because the economy is so bad right now. Also, I was worried before to begin school if I would be able to write in English.

Once in classes, her anxieties about her English and her self-esteem continued. She recalled that time, saying,

I know when I was in Quebec, I was a business analyst for the second biggest telecommunication company in Canada. I bought my house at 25-years-old alone, but here I am nothing because when people look at me, they don't think I am intelligent or bright. They are just thinking I am this person who is in the U.S. and don't really speak English or has an accent. When people make jokes I don't understand all the time. It is the same with my classes. Like we know our professors will judge us, of course, and they do. You know as student you will be boring during the semester because you will be more shy to speak. And you know other students will judge you and will look at you, and you know at the beginning of the semester, your professor will be, 'I'm not sure if she will be able to go through the semester.' It's not everybody who understands what it is to be somebody where this language is not their first language, especially when you are

30-years old or older. They're like, 'What is she doing here?' 'Poor Jeannette! What is she doing in this class?'

Unlike Jeannette's, Ahmed's move into U.S. higher education came almost twenty years after he and his family came to the United States and was motivated by the need to improve his job skills to support his family. He commented that after a business venture failed, college seemed to be necessary, but he had concerns,

I look for job...no job. There were jobs, but everybody wanted associate degree or bachelor's degree, and you have to have this certificate program or this or this. And I called here at [community college]. Somebody told me I could get the PLC certificate and the PLC certificate [programming systems for computer-assisted manufacturing]. So I just came here to get those courses for those certificate programs. But I cannot take that directly; I have to take pre-requisite first. At first I thought I don't know if I'm going to do that because it has been a long time that I leave my education. I don't know if I'm going to do that.

Joseph's introduction to life in the United States and pursuit of higher education, while not driven by a personal crisis, had significant challenges as he learned the culture, language, and requirements of academic life. After spending five months learning basic English at the American Center in his home town in Gabon, he came to the United States with the intent of studying at Murfreesboro College [now Middle Tennessee State University]. After landing at JFK airport alone, he had to negotiate a number of challenges. He remembered the early days of his arrival in the U.S., saying,

I couldn't understand anything because the accent was very different...very different. I couldn't even express myself, even the basic things. I was to attend Murfreesboro State

University, so I took the bus. It wasn't easy to find a bus. I did ask, 'I need to go to Tennessee, to Nashville, but I don't know how to do that....the way to get there. I need to take the bus.' First, I try to talk to the driver, but it wasn't easy to talk to the driver. But I tried my best. I went to Murfreesboro; that was a long trip. It was two days on the bus. And the weather was very cold, and I didn't have any coats on me. Wow, it was freezing. I got there on Sunday night, and I went to school on Monday morning, and the first thing they asked me was the money here to pay for the tuition and fee. And I didn't have enough. The school was really too expensive, and I couldn't enter the school.

After taking a bus to Virginia hoping to stay with a cousin, Joseph was able to find a Cameroon community who connected him to the Cameroon community in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. His first effort once in Harrisburg was to search out the community college and strengthen his English, and his transition to academic life brought other challenges. He reflected on his early experiences enrolling in community college, stating,

And then I started to go to the library every day and take some books [in English]. I went home and start to read. I came to the college and take tests [reading and writing placement tests], and they say my English is all right, and I can start classes. I went to take my math test [the math placement test] because math is my major, and when she [the advisor] saw the results, she say, 'Oh, I don't think your English is good enough to study that math level [pre-calculus].' I take the course, and I need to study very hard. When I first started in the class, I had a lot of problems with the vocabulary, and you could see that. My first test was a high 'B' because I had problem with the vocabulary and I had the problem with the book somewhat. I didn't really understand.

Influence of Previous Higher Education Experience

Several of the participants had previous higher education experience in their native languages and countries of origin. This background was a significant influence on the participants' experiences and successes as they pursued higher education at community college.

For example, Christine, who has a bachelor's and master's degree in literature from Zheng Zhou University in China, recognized that her current educational goals are shaped by her life situation but solidly grounded in her background of academic success and goals in higher education. Speaking of the shift from her earlier higher education experience to her new field of study, she noted,

Literature was my first passion, and it still is, but now I'm in Psychology. I could apply directly to literature Ph.D.. I can just take the GRE test and apply to graduate school for literature. But I want to study people, so I register myself in community college to begin that study. I want to pursue a master's degree in Psychology to be a therapist. To have a Ph.D. has always been my childhood dream. I want, actually, to get my Ph.D. and hopefully, go back to China and teach. Psychology in China is a new curriculum, it is just getting into the curriculum the past five years. Now that Psychology is back to the curriculum, people really, really need the teacher, a specialist in clinical. I want to help the Chinese people in China or here. There is a massive Chinese population here. There is not much awareness of mental illness in Chinese community of Asian community. They need to bring more awareness.

Christine's early experiences with a bachelor's and master's degree in literature in China and the confidence arising from those successes helped her think purposefully about a Ph.D. (even a Ph.D. in a different academic discipline) and a career in either clinical practice or

teaching in higher education. Because of her earlier higher education, this goal seemed reasonable and accessible.

Christine's prior education in China also led directly to her current employment in the learning center at the community college. Her certification at a previous community college in Pittsburgh included 20 credits of Psychology, but for an AA in Psychology and transfer for a baccalaureate and graduate study, she needed to take research methods and statistics. She explained,

So I come here [to community college] to take statistics. And they say, 'Well, you have to take a lot of math before statistics.' And I say, 'I want to take a placement test.' I never practiced math for years. I didn't study or review, but I got a very, very good score [placing into second level calculus]. In China, we study college-level math, and I still remembered it. That's one of the strengths of the Chinese education system—it is very, very strict; they train you well. It is very hard; you have to study very hard, and Chinese students are trained very well.

This successful placement in mathematics enabled Christine to register in statistics courses and research design in Psychology, as well as become eligible to work as a math tutor in the learning center.

Mona, another student with significant higher education credentials from her country of origin, found that in addition to her RN credentialing, her prior educational experiences profoundly shaped her academic expectations of herself and the college environment. She commented,

I don't know about the people here or in other countries, but in Germany, we learn to learn. We learn to organize. That was one thing I noticed in native speakers in my

English 003 and 101 classes. They don't get their work ready on time. In Germany, if you have to bring a paper on Monday, you bring a paper on Monday. There is no excuse. In nursing school, that is the way it is: very straight and you have to do it the right way. Not tomorrow or later. In my nursing school, we have only nursing and science classes. For writing and reading, you have to know this. You have to know how to write a paper from your school [referring to secondary schools—gymnasium, real school, or haupt school]. Everyone knows students can do this.

She summed up the impact for her of her previous education quite simply, “I know how to learn; I know how a paper looks. For people that are well-educated it is so easier. They have the tools; they just need to change the language.”

Jeannette, another student with undergraduate and graduate-level higher education experiences in Canada, echoed Mona's perspectives about the positive influence of her prior experience as it shaped her approach to academic demands. She noted, “I did pretty well in my classes [in community college] that I took because I have learned to be well-organized, and I know how to study because I'm older and I have studied before.”

Like Christine, Mona, and Jeannette, Eduard had background and experience in higher education from his native country of Haiti. His experience was more diversified than theirs, and the influence of that experience on his current pursuits is oriented to both content and attitude. With Baccaulaureate 1 and 2 credentials, as well as college training as a math teacher, as well as some time in engineering and art school, it is his graduation from law school that is most relevant to his studies. Speaking of his Paralegal Studies courses in his current curriculum, he said,

I'm doing pretty good. I'm getting 95, or 59 out of 60. I'm getting good grades. Maybe it's because I already learned that stuff, it gives me the ability to understand other [legal]

stuff. When she [the instructor] discusses it, I understand it right there. It doesn't take me time to understand it. I have the structure and the concept and the logic, and that is what makes me able to do it.

Besides, the background in the academic discipline of paralegal studies, Eduard cited the role of his earlier educational experience on his attitude and confidence. Referring to life in Haiti, he said, "One of the things over there, if you have a focus that you want to be somebody, the only way to be somebody is to get the Bac 2 [Baccalaureate 2]. It's hard, and it's a long way to go. It's tough, and you have to work hard. They give it only one time a year, and it takes five days for the exam, and the results are announced on the radio. It's a big deal."

The confidence from graduating with a Baccalaureate 2 as well as his law school degree carried into his initial academic experiences here. When he began community college in New York, his initial courses were ESL courses. He placed into the lowest level, which was upsetting to him. He recalled,

I was pissed off when they put me in that [045], because you have to go from 045 to 055 to 099 and then to English 101. I don't have enough money to pay for all those years of English. I said to the teacher, 'Is there a way to go from 045 to 101?' The teacher (she was a Russian lady) said 'There is a possibility, but it is rare. You have to pass the 099 test with an A, and you have to have your writing good and your reading good. And the reading on that test is very, very, very tough.' And I say, 'If there's a possibility, I will do it.' When they had the test, everybody was shocked because I went from 045 to 101.

He also, based on his earlier educational experiences, developed a self-driven and independent approach to his own learning. At the New York community college and in his current study, Eduard reflected,

I've never been into tutoring. If I've got a possibility to learn it on my own, I do. I got all kinds of books, even grammar books and dictionaries. I buy them because I have to learn. I don't have things perfectly, but I'm always trying. I have to learn it by myself; I have to teach myself. I keep looking, and I keep finding what I need to know.

For all of these participants, their current academic experience is significantly and positively impacted by the content expertise as well as the confidence and mind-set developed from their earlier experiences in higher education.

Challenges in the Development of Academic Writing

Once they moved solidly into the academic world of community college and curricular requirements of their programs, the participants noted a number of challenges that they faced as they developed their capabilities in academic writing.

Gap Between Content Knowledge and the Ability to Communicate it in English

One of the challenges that many of the participants noted was the frustration of having complex or sophisticated ideas pertinent to writing assignments without the fluency in English expression to articulate them.

For example, Christine, comfortable and skilled in writing in Chinese, struggled with academic writing in English. She commented on her anxieties related to academic writing, "Writing in Chinese is easy for me, but writing in English is not that easy for me. I feel—ok, if I use one word to describe how I feel about writing English, I would say, 'I don't like to write.'" Based on her experiences and conversations with other students, she said that many Chinese students prefer to focus their choice of academic programs in math, computer science, and science fields rather than the social sciences which require extensive academic writing. She, however, has opted for a long period of writing-intensive study in psychology. She said, "Not

many people come for social science, for psychology, because there was a lot of English writing. That is your disadvantage, your handicap.” She has never been required to take a composition or writing course in English because she began her study in the U.S. with undergraduate and graduate transcripts from China. Her study has been in specific content courses for her Psychology certificate and associate degree programs. She commented that writing is a source of anxiety for her, using a metaphor for her frustration:

I always have this fear coming from this writing. For myself, I know clearly that I write long sentences. I cannot stop myself because my thinking is very complex, and because my major was literature, I like to describe things, describe things fully, give people a picture. But it’s the language. I feel like if you ask me to build a house as my little project, I don’t have enough mature language. I can’t make my building or my house to look so pretty, so nice the way I want it to be. Because I only have the brick. I don’t have something to decorate it.

She continued, reflecting on other challenges in her academic writing:

At this stage in my English level, I can write a draft, but I don’t feel comfortable to present it as a final project. I feel like it needs to be polished. I need someone to look at it, and then I can present it. I feel like I cannot even finish this writing project by myself. I am insecure about the polishing in English. I know basic English grammar; I know how to form a sentence; I know how to use the clause or prepositions. I guess my weakest area in English is using very precise vocabulary. So I’m saying that my vocabulary is still very limited. I don’t feel that I can represent my real thinking, my real ability. I’m constantly stopping and struggling in choosing words...in my mind searching which is the best word.

Linda echoed Christine's struggle with precision of expression in the effort to articulate ideas, saying

It just takes me a long time because I'm pretty anal about my writing. I can't move on to the next sentence unless I'm happy with what I've written. I go through it so many times. I have to make sure that I write what I really want to write. There are so many times that I think of what I want to write, but then I can't put it down in words, I can't find the words and the sentences. So I tend to stop there until I can get to have what I'm thinking down in words.

Jeannette also spoke of her concerns about not being able to represent her thinking and knowledge. She remembered,

At the beginning I was writing a very, very simple way. I knew that this way I would not make any mistakes because I knew the words. But maybe one month after the beginning of the semester, I was like, 'Jeannette, if you want to learn your English, you need to push yourself harder, so just write the same as you would in French.' But then I realize, 'Oh my god, I am so bad in English.' There are things I am not able to write. When you write, you like to use beautiful words to express your knowledge and your personality and who you are—strong words that will speak to the readers. But you realize that when you write in English you can't do that.

Referencing her efforts to write a paper and do research on the topic of the implications of outsourcing (a subject that she had deep knowledge and professional experience with), Jeannette expressed her dilemma, saying, "So I didn't know which was the best way to learn. Should I write with simple words and not say my ideas or should I try to write in a bad way but the way I want to say it?"

For these participants, their limitations in written English also limited their ability to learn and communicate their ideas in specific content areas, even when their knowledge and content competency was fairly sophisticated.

Specialized Content and Specialized Writing Genres

Another challenge faced by many of the participants as they pursued study in specialized academic disciplines was adapting their writing and reading to specialized content and specialized writing expectations.

One of the challenges expressed by many of the participants is the difficulty of mastering specific academic content as well as learning and communicating that knowledge in a new language. In some of the courses they have taken, they had to master not only demanding academic content and concepts but vocabulary and terminology specific to that content that would not be part of general English usage.

For example, in her earlier academic course work for her Phlebotomy Certificate, Zohreh encountered daunting challenges in mastering the reading and writing required in her human biology courses. She said,

There was much [English] vocabulary that I had to learn—veins and arteries and medical terms. I remember maybe 10 hours, 9 hours a day—I just had my table, all the time that I had to cook for my children or wash the dishes, but other than that, my paper and my books were here on the table, and I was just writing and finding new words. It was hard. You can't believe how much time I spent. Every class I am taking, and some days, I tell my son, 'When is the day I am taking one class and I am comfortable?'

Mona had similar challenges in the nursing class (Obstetric Care) that she took at community college as part of her preparation for her Pennsylvania nursing licensure exam.

Despite having been ICU nurse for ten years in Germany and being comfortable with the general content, the learning dynamic in English was very different. She noted,

It is really hard, hard, and I need a lot of studying. It works, but it is really, really hard.

One thing is the lectures that the teacher gives. I know the stuff [the content], but not in English. And they are moving really, really fast. So there is a lot of stuff that I have to remember, and hearing it and then writing it. A lot of times I know what she said, but then I have to write it, and I don't have the words. And I'm sitting at home looking over my notes, and 'oh, what did I mean when I wrote that?' So it is hard...hard. But it works...I hope that it works.

Besides the challenges of mastering and communicating specific academic content knowledge, many of the participants experienced concerns about their ability to approach specific academic writing tasks. Jeannette spoke of one type of academic assignment that was particularly difficult for her—the assignment to summarize or paraphrase a research source. While this type of writing is challenge for most students in the first two years of their academic work, for a second-language student, that challenge is much greater, as Jeannette found out. She explained,

The challenge for me when I was writing with research was not doing plagiarism. It was very, very hard to me, I have to say, when I was writing because I don't have a lot of vocabulary in English. When I was reading a text, it was hard to put it in your own words, and I'm so limited in my vocabulary. So for me, this was a big challenge—not to do plagiarism. That was very hard. I have to use other words, but I don't have other words; I can't put it into other words because I don't have other words. Even when I was looking in the dictionary to find synonyms, I would try some words and some

sentences, but I am also afraid to explain the concept or what I want to say in the wrong way. I remember when I was doing an essay about an economic concept, but I was ‘oh my god, it’s too complicated for me. I think I understand it to summarize it, but I’m not able to say it in English in my own words.’

Another type of writing situation that challenged several participants was learning the specialized style, format, and discourse of a particular discipline. Christine’s most immediate academic writing challenges came as she had to learn the format and style of social science research report writing. She said,

There is something I wrote for my academic paper for my psychology class. The professor expected us to do an experimental research design, and we had just begun the class. I don’t know what she wants or what it should be like. I know it has a language and style and format that I don’t know. I am afraid it won’t be right.

For two other participants, the challenge of learning a specific academic discourse for curricular work was complicated by the fact that the academic discourse had to meet the specific requirements of professional legal writing as defined by statute and the American Bar Association. Because their academic program was an AA in Paralegal Studies, Eduard and Pilar had to master the distinct professional discourse of legal writing required for wills, complaints, court petitions, and other legal documents.

Because Eduard had a law degree from Haiti, much of the legal context of the paralegal studies classes was comfortable for him, but the writing demands were new. Regarding the challenges of the content in the Paralegal Studies program, he noted,

I always had that background for my law school, so it wasn’t a real big gap. We did not really have much legal writing until the second semester, and that’s when I started a lot of

legal writing. In the Family Law class, I had to start writing complaints, and that's where I had to learn to write. I know there's a language and a format that I have to follow when I do mine, and it's very specific. Sometimes I make mistakes.

Pilar undertook her work in Paralegal Studies without as much background in the legal environment as Eduard, and learning the style and format of legal writing was more challenging. She explained,

In courses for my major, like Legal Research and Writing and Civil Litigation, there's a lot of writing involved which is very different from the kind of writing that you do for English class or even Business Law or philosophy or other college classes. You have to speak and write in a very different way. That's one thing that my Paralegal [Studies] teacher said would be hard to break. She said that when we first start doing legal writing, it's hard to break from what you've been taught as far as college writing, because it's not college writing; it's legal writing and it's completely different. You don't use the same sentence structures or even words. It's different—it's definitely different.

Explaining that much legal writing requires a solid understanding of legal cases, Pilar commented on how the role of reading and understanding case law is critical in this type of writing and created even more challenges for her,

[For a case brief] you actually read a case from the courts, and you have to take out the issues addressed by the courts, and the courts obviously write obviously write in a legal way. It takes a lot of reading. I could read a case hundreds of times. Sometimes you'd almost memorize because the way they write is so much more different than the writing that you're used to. And sometimes it's really confusing. You have to pick out the issues, and you have to address all the important aspects. But what made them make

their decision, that's the key point that you have to pull out. Like this case from the law book went from page 853 to page 857, and I had to write a brief that was only one and a half pages. I had to read it like ten times before I could kind of pick it apart, identify what the issues are and what the court is addressing. You get tips from the teachers and eventually become better at it with practice, but it's a really hard kind of writing to learn.

Clearly, several of the participants had to negotiate significant challenges in mastering specific content and specific writing requirements as they pursued their academic programs

Support for Development of Academic Writing Competence and Confidence

Besides exploring a number of challenges associated with their transition into the academic environment and specific fields of academic study, the participants identified and explained a number of elements in their personal and academic lives that supported the development of competence and confidence in their ability to write for academic situations. These elements or factors that supported their development of academic writing included personal support networks, related literacy practices like reading and speaking, the college writing center, and specific classroom expectations and pedagogical approaches.

Supportive Network

For some of the participants, the encouragement of supportive family, significant others, or academic mentors provided a foundation for confidence and perseverance as well as practical help. For Jeannette, the encouragement as well as the editing help provided by her bilingual boyfriend have been valuable for her. "I was worried a little bit before to begin school, if I would be able to write in English. But I knew I was surrounded by my boyfriend who is French but played fifteen years of pro hockey here in the U.S., so he is perfectly bilingual. And I knew that he was standing by me all the time." In addition to encouraging Jeannette to continue to

study and improve her English, her boyfriend has helped her and continues to help her by proofreading her personal and even academic writing when asked, often to her chagrin. She noted,

I thought by this time I would be bilingual, and I feel so terrible now. Every time I write an e-mail, he needs to correct my e-mails because I know I'm still making a lot of mistakes. So this is terrible for me because I don't have any independence. Every day, when I write in English, every words and sentences, I have to print it and he needs to correct it for me.

For Pavel, Zohreh, and Mona, a teacher became personal mentor, supporting and encouraging them long after the class had ended. For Pavel, his ESL teacher from high school was a significant influence in his development of writing. He recalled,

My ESL instructor in high school...she was interesting. I remember really clearly in my mind what she taught us, how she presented, how she'd teach us how to write. She taught me most of my writing. She taught me how to organize a paper, how to fix my mistakes, go back and re-read properly the paper and fix those mistakes. She brought me to the American standard of students—how they write—I had to build up to the point where my classmates were. She helped me reach the last jump to do that.

Even years later, he relies on her help. “For big assignments, I still go back to my very close ESL teacher in high school. During school hours or after school, I'd come to visit her, and she helps me with my thinking and planning and helps me fix my mistakes.”

For Mona and Zohreh, the academic mentor was a college teacher in their early ESL or developmental writing work. Mona found the blend of high expectations and encouragement to be the foundation of an academic mentoring relationship. She explained,

We had a lot of writing in Debbie's class. We had to write every week one journal, we had four major papers, we had the discussion board. But she gives us always a commentary about what—she always corrects us and said, 'This was good' and 'This is perfect.' She was always positive. With Debbie, she always say, 'That was good, but...'. And she always give us ideas to make it better. And that is a good way. She is still my friend...she is amazing.

Zohreh had a similar experience with a faculty tutor at the writing center, a tutoring relationship that became a friendship and mentoring relationship. She commented, We are still good friends, close friends. She was the first person I met at the writing center. I just work with Susan for three years. And every day, I just look for Susan. She is great teaching the ESL students. She just finished her master's degree in ESL, and I went to the place where she have the presentation. I went for her and took her picture when she got her masters. So she helped me in writing center for three years. [She helped me with] everything about English—I would say she taught me everything about English. After a while, she even help me by e-mail. And she is still helping me with everything. After a while we decided to go out to have lunch. And after first lunch, we are just making friends...to be a friend. She is a friend and a....is it 'mentor'? A teacher and a friend.

Reading as a Resource for Learning to Write

Another element of the participants' lives that several noted as a supporting factor in their academic development was reading. When asked "How did you learn to write?" Linda responded, "I love to read. And because I read, I write. I've always written journals, and it's a

way for me to transfer how I feel. I love reading books, and when I see new words—I like seeing new words—I’ll look it up and then I can use it in writing.”

Like Linda, Mona found that reading, even of popular books, has been a great help in her development of academic writing. She explained,

Reading is a good way [to develop comfort in academic work]. I am starting to read English books. In the beginning, everyone told me, ‘You have to read books for children.’ And I love to reading in German. So I started to read children’s books, and I said, ‘No, no, no way, no way.’ You need something that you are really interested in. And then I started with Tess Gerritson. And right now, I read the new book by Ken Follett, *The Fall of Giants*...stupid idea! [laughter] That book is very difficult and very big! But I am learning so much about English and English words and sentences.

Halima had a similar perspective on the role of reading, even popular fiction or magazines. She said, “It helps a lot because every time you read or every page you read, you find out a new word and the way of saying something, some idiomatic expressions. All of that will improve your talking, your way of saying things, your writing.”

Another participant, Eduard, realizing that he needed to understand the expectations for academic writing, and therefore turned to reading. “I catch it up really quick by reading—a lot. I had books. I bought a lot of books about essays. You know, read what they say and what they do, and what exactly they do. It helps me to define what I need to do. In the end, I was ok.” In fact, Eduard found his own reading preferable to going to the writing center for tutoring. He stated,

I’ve never been into the tutoring stuff. If I need to go to a tutoring class, it’s not going to help me for what I need. I got the possibility to learn it on my own. I got all kind of

grammar books...I see it, it's good, I read it. I read them when I'm not doing nothing. Everything—dictionary, grammar books, I always buy them because I know I have things I have to learn [about writing]. I don't have things perfectly (even in French), and I'm always trying.

Regularly Speaking English as a Resource for Learning to Write

For several participants, the simple activity of speaking English a lot was even more influential in the development of academic writing competency and confidence than reading.

For example, Mona referenced the importance of speaking English as well as reading as a foundation to fluency and comfort in academic writing. She noted that she found speaking English to be much more challenging than writing, saying,

Writing is easier because I can think. With speaking I'm a little bit shy, and I don't want to say anything wrong, and sometimes I speak, and then I think, 'Oh no, that was mistake! The term was wrong, the time was wrong.' But with writing, I can write and then read it again and correct myself, and so writing is easier for me.

Because speaking is harder for her, she explained that it pushes her level of English fluency and helps even her writing. Speaking of the experience of speaking in classes and participating in discussions, she said, "I don't like it. Because then I'm thinking, 'Oh, I don't find the right word and then my grammar and my sentences.' But it is great because it helps me. It is really a good pressure for me to have to participate in class. To speak...just to speak." Commenting on speaking as a help for her in academic writing, she said, "'That's the only thing—to speak, to read, to study. Put away the translator [pocket translation device] and just speak!'"

Jeannette echoed some of Mona's perspectives, finding that success in academic work was related to reading but much more to speaking. She stated,

I read a lot in English, and I watched tv a lot in English, but to be honest with you, I don't think this helped me any. I think that you need to be immersed and to speak in English. I don't think reading the key or is just one part. To be successful in writing, I think you also need to be successful in reading and speaking too. You know, the way I speak will affect the way I write. The key of writing is to speak.

She also recognized the importance of participating in class discussions as a part of the experience of gaining fluency in speaking and consequently in academic development. She explained,

I appreciate that my professor would ask me questions. My English professor was very kind. She would say, 'Jeannette what do you think?' I was feeling so happy, and I was talking all the time in this class. And, of course, because she was able to understand me, if she knew I said something wrong and the class couldn't understand me, she would repeat it to the class. I was so thankful at the end of the semester because I got to be part of a class. I got to participate. I felt important, so I was more motivated to learn and was more motivated to write. Most professor don't ask you questions because they know that you're not very comfortable and everything, but I don't think that this is really helping the student.

Halima reinforced the role of speaking in developing academic capabilities when she shared the advice she would give to a second-language speaker beginning study in college saying,

The more you talk, the more you improve yourself in college. Lots of talking...make friends with Americans and talk...just talk! You can make mistake. I used to tell my friends, 'You know, English is not my first language, so I just want you to correct me sometimes when I make some mistakes. So it help you a lot when they say, 'What do you mean by saying this?' And then I explain, and they say, 'Oh, then you should say this instead of this.' This helps a lot.

Working with Tutors in the Writing Center

Besides the presence of a support network and the activities of reading and speaking, a frequently-recommended resource for support in academic writing, work with writing tutors at the writing center, was recommended by a few of the participants. Others had more mixed experiences with tutoring in the writing center.

Jeannette, for example, voiced enthusiastic appreciation for the support of the writing center tutors in her college writing experiences. Initially, she felt reluctant to go to the writing center, remembering,

To be honest, I was too ashamed to go to the writing center with this paper, and this sucks because I think they would be the people that would be able to help me. They would have been able to explain me, but I was too ashamed to do that. They would think, 'Oh my god, this is so bad!'

When required to go there by a teacher in developmental writing, Jeanette did so and found a positive experience, continuing,

I have to say the when I went there, they understand our situation. They are specialized with student who have difficulty with their English. They have a lot of traditional [English-speaking] students, of course, but for people who are learning English, they are

very, very, very good. In every aspect. It could be grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, using the right word.

Her advice to a new adult second-language college student included the role of the writing center: “Go to the writing center, even if you are embarrassed. Please let them know about your situation. They will help your writing.”

Like Jeannette, Zohreh had helpful experiences with her academic writing when she went to the writing center but voiced a qualified recommendation. Referencing the challenges of doing academic research and writing, she said,

I was always in the writing center. The writing center just saved me all the time. I always say if there wasn't a writing center here, I would never make it in these classes up to now. They just help the student so much. But I can see right now that if there is no professional person [professional or faculty tutor as opposed to a peer or student tutor] in the writing center, the math, or computer, the student have a hard time, especially for ESL students.

Speaking of the support from a professional tutor in her writing of a British literature paper connecting the ideas in Mary Wollstonecraft's work *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* to the contemporary situation of Iranian women, Zohreh related,

I always went to Sharon, and she helped me finish the paper on women, on Iranian women. Sharon always says, ‘I don't want to change your ideas.’ And I say, ‘Yeah, that's ok, I don't want you to change my ideas. I just want to show me how to change the sentence if it doesn't make sense if the American people read it or my professor read it.’ Most of the time, I have to explain to Sharon what I want to say, and she help me change it to the good way that makes sense in English. I keep all the paper that I take to the

writing center, and sometimes go through them and see why this sentence is wrong. And I don't make the same mistakes any more.

In contrast to Jeannette's and Zohreh's experiences, Pilar's experience with the writing center wasn't helpful. She said,

I don't go to the writing lab. When I did start English 101, I did go once for some help because I was scared. But when I went to the writing lab and got some help from a tutor, I felt like I was at the same level as that person. They told me about formatting and all that, but I didn't really feel like it was necessary. I do my writing on my own.

Halima was another participant who did not have a good experience with the writing center. Referencing a particular short research paper, she said,

I went to the writing center, but you know sometimes, you have the kind of correcting the paper in their own way. Like here, [referencing a place in her text] I was so mad. I write it down in my first draft, I wrote the definition according to the dictionary, and the lady [in the writing center] told me, 'No, you don't have to write it down.' And here, you see, my teacher told me 'Coming from where?' After the class, I show her my first draft and show here that I have it, but the lady from the writing center told me, 'you don't need it.'

Engaging in Online Discussions

Another experience that several participants referenced as strengthening their academic writing was participation in online discussion boards used in online, hybrid, or even traditional courses.

Linda noted that she had taken a number of online courses, including English 101 and Philosophy, that require extensive writing in discussion postings as part of the course and has found that that activity encourages her writing. Commenting on one post on "The American

Dream,” she said, “It was supposed to be a reading reaction, but it ended up being a short essay. I like to write on the discussion postings. For an essay, he [the professor] can limit the length, but for the discussion post, he couldn’t tell me I could only say so much, so it’s longer.” [laughter]

Jeannette has also participated in online discussion postings, and she responded enthusiastically to the impact of online discussions in her academic development: “There is something that has helped me a lot with my writing. We had to participate a lot on the discussion board. I don’t think a lot of students like that because this is a lot of work, and for me especially because before I would post anything, my boyfriend had to correct everything. But I think this is a good way to learn because it is writing a lot and in a different format.”

Another participant, Mona, reinforced the helpfulness of that activity, noting simply, “The WebCT discussion board—it was a good way for me. We had to read before—we had to read the newspaper and then we have to think and then we have to write. All that helps a lot [with academic writing].”

The findings of the study suggest the strength and possibilities of online writing in discussions as a support and facilitation of meaning making in academic literacy contexts.

Receiving Written Feedback from Teachers

One aspect of the student-teacher interaction that several students commented on as a significant facilitator in the development of academic writing competence and confidence was thoughtful, supportive, prompt feedback on their writing.

Noting two examples of feedback on written work that she had experienced, Mona cited a less helpful class.

I think feedback is the most important thing. In [a specific class], we have to write a lot of papers. I get an A on a paper. And we have conference about how we did in this class,

and she say, ‘Everything is fine. You wrote everything 100%.’ [sighs] I don’t think that is true because I know what I know, and I’m pretty sure that at this point, I cannot write a test like an A. This is not helpful for me. I know that I am not perfect. I’m not stupid. I know that my English writing is not good. I don’t like that everyone say, ‘Hey, you are perfect. Your English is great.’ It is not! And I know this. I don’t need to hear this from a teacher. I need to hear from a teacher how I can get better. It was easy to get an A [in this class], but I did not learn something.

Contrasting that experience with another class, Mona reinforced the helpfulness of thoughtful and pointed feedback in a different course.

In [a specific class], we are supposed to bring every week two papers of writing, and she [the professor] wrote every time comments—what was good and what was wrong. She always gave us a commentary about what...she always corrected us and said, ‘This was good’ and ‘This was perfect’ and ‘This is good, but...’ She was positive but told us how to make it better. She would make a circle around our mistakes so we can find out what was wrong. That was really, really helpful for me.

Joseph was another participant who found pointed feedback from a teacher to be extremely valuable in academic development in a range of skills, including writing. He stated, I think that this [going to a teacher for help] is one of the best ways to learn, in writing or anything else. You need to know your problems and meet your instructor and figure out the problem. Go to your instructor. The first thing is to know your problem, know your real problem. Sometimes after a test, you need to focus on the result of the test, and what you did wrong and why you did wrong. You can take a look at what you did good...take a look. But then focus on what you did wrong and try to figure out the way to fix it. Try

it by yourself first, and then meet your instructor all that thing that you couldn't figure out by yourself. They do help...they are in the office for that. I'm trying to change and improve. I don't want to be at the same level all the time.

Eduard was another participant who felt that his experience in developing academic writing was impacted by specific feedback.

I've done writing, but the academic part was different. I learned [from the professor] that I had a weakness in my structure, but I learned what it is and I know how to correct it. The problem is when you don't know the weakness, and you don't know how to correct it. You might always make the mistake. Writing is a learning process.

Using Models and Templates for Writing

One of the resources and learning experiences that almost all of the participants noted as critical in their development of academic writing was the use of models of academic writing to help them develop an intellectual template of the structure and logic of academic writing, as well as clarify concretely the expectations of the teacher.

The principle behind the value of models of academic writing was articulated by Joseph. When I tried to improve my writing, I would always talk to my teacher and say, 'I need some examples because I think that examples are a better way to improve.' When she give me some examples, I'll go through the example to create mine. I take it as a model. Like when I play soccer, I need to watch somebody else and try to learn. Like if I watch Ronaldo, one of the great soccer player, I create my own play from what I learned from him, and that is good. My own version of it. But I can't create from nothing. Maybe it's possible, but I don't think so. You always need something that someone did

before...to take a model and try to improve and what I need to do. And after I do that and I learn how to do it, then I don't need it any more because it is already in my brain.

Both Eduard and Jeannette also found great value in models, and they worked from textbooks as they pursued their development of academic writing. Eduard commented, In English 102 [second semester composition], I found there was weakness in my writing. I didn't have the structure, the proper form. I wasn't sure the structure or organization they wanted. I went to the textbook that had essays and was telling me what I need to know. I realized you have to have the top and the bottom, the conclusion. There was a way to arrange things in the middle to make it be the way it was supposed to be. I read what the books said and exactly what the examples did. It helped me define what I needed to do. Since then I did ok.

Similarly, Jeannette confirmed the value of examples to illustrate the form and expectations for academic writing, referencing an adage: "We have this expression in France, 'To swim, follow others'." Referencing the value of using models for her writing, she continued,

We had this book to help us [*St. Martin's Guide to Writing*], so I was reading; it was very easy to understand. For the introduction, you need this and you need to ask this question. So I was trying to do this, and what I was doing that helped me a lot is that I was reading other example essays, and I was finding the essay that was most related to my topic or the way that I wanted to express my ideas. I could shape my ideas to fit that model, and I knew that all the models that was in the book, they were good...or the professor was thinking they were good. So I was doing that. This helped me a lot. After that it was easier to write. It was the same in my other English class. Our professor

gave us a lot of models because she wanted to help us. This helped me be more confident that I would succeed in my class. Because I was thinking that maybe if I don't have the best idea, if I don't have the best words, and it's not very fancy what I did, at least I have the right format and I follow the models.

Zohreh noted the benefit of having a clear sense of the structure of an academic paper internalized intellectually when she said,

I always come up with a good paper. I know the introduction, the three different body sections, the conclusion. You can do it for any paper...just follow it. When I'm writing it, I just go over the notes and the research and find which point is related to which one, which should be first, second, and third.

High Expectations and Hard Work

Finally, a frequent theme in the academic writing experiences of the participants is the value of faculty members' having high and explicit expectations, as well as creating an academic environment that challenges students to work hard to meet those expectations.

Jeannette was motivated in her writing process to revise and improve her early drafts because of her clear sense of what academic writing entailed and what the professor demanded. She said,

Because I knew the expectation of the professor, I didn't want to make any English mistakes. I knew it wasn't good enough. In every level, I knew the expectation of the professor. I wrote an e-mail to the professor and I said, 'I'm sorry my first draft is not very good, but I will work harder on the final one. I will do my best on the final one.'

Referencing the way that she learned to meet this level of academic writing excellence, she spoke of a particular writing approach in a class. She stated,

We had to write a lot but just a little bit at a time. So usually it was maybe two pages. But she [the professor] was telling us that even if we write two pages, they had to be perfect, without mistakes. And it was very important to be able to understand the main topic and the main arguments in the text.

Talking about getting feedback that signaled errors and weaknesses to be corrected, Jeannette reflected,

Did I find that discouraging? To be honest with you, I liked it a lot, because that is the only way I will get better. It helps me a lot, and I appreciate that. I like to see where I did well and where my mistakes were because I know her expectations. When the professor corrects what you are doing, she knows you understand and you are smart.

Similarly, Mona was enthusiastic about valuing learning experiences that required effort, feeling that only with significant effort did she learn and expand her capacity. Rather than resent hard work, she respects learning environments that required it. Speaking of one her early academic writing experiences in community college, she said,

It was a lot of work. I never did so much work for [another class] or [another class], but it was so good. It helped me so much. Some people said, ‘Oh, it is too much.’ It was a lot, but it was good. We learned a lot, and now we can write well. We had to work for our grades.

Speaking of her experience in her ESL classes, she continued,

The hardest class was our ESL class because they are very strict, and they expect a lot. They push us a lot. And then we come to [lists subsequent college-level classes], and it is very easy with no hard work, and I think, ‘What is going on here?’ Others [other students] are happy because it’s like ‘Yeah, ok, you can come when you want... you

don't have to,' and it's really easy. And I am sitting there, 'I pay a lot of money for this class. I want to work hard and learn something.'

Likewise, Pilar and Pavel both connected their experiences with high expectations with their development of confidence in their ability to write. Pavel commented about his approach to an academic writing assignment, "At first, I think 'Oh my god, I'm not able to do this.' But then I start the steps of writing, and I build up confidence, like 'Yes, I can do this; come on, I can do this.' Because I wrote very, very well for hard teachers, so I know I can do it."

Similarly, Pilar reflected on her development of confidence in her first college writing course, stating:

At first, I was hesitant to write because I didn't think I would be able to do it right; I didn't have confidence in my writing. I felt like I was behind because I was so much older than the other kids that were there in class. My teacher seemed to have so much faith in them because they had come from good high schools and they were Americans. I didn't go to high school here, didn't take an English class, didn't know how they taught English here. I was definitely on my own. But I kept following the instructions and expectations that she gave us and working hard, and I kept getting good grades—like 97, 98, 95. So then I thought, 'I guess I'm doing something right. I guess I'm good.'"

Remembering his experiences in development confidence in his academic writing, Ahmed emphasized the role that the encouragement of a teacher combined with high expectations had a profound impact on his ability to meet the academic demands. He reflected on a recent experience in a challenging class, saying,

Last semester, I had six courses; that's a lot for me. I thought I might have to drop one or two courses. I had one class, it was art [art history, a Humanities and Arts General

Education elective required for the associate degree]. My first test, it was very bad. I failed the test...I failed. So I went to my teacher and say, 'I want to drop this class.' And she said, 'I know you will be a success in this class. Don't drop it. You can drop at the last moment if you want to drop. But we have three more tests and two more paper. So try.' And then I tried, and I didn't give up. And I passed. I met her one day when I went up to take my speech class, and she saw me and say, 'Oh my god...how are you?' She gave me a very good, very warm...meeting. She was very happy. She said, 'You did a very good job, a very hard job, and a very good job.'

Noting the role of expectations as well as encouragement in the development of confidence in academic writing, Halima commented on the impact of clear expectations and high standards for her as she developed competence in academic writing, noting an experience in which she was challenged to write more academic, "more formal papers." Her class required her to raise her precision of language, her clarity of sentence structure, her integration of research, and her development of ideas. After being challenged in this class, her assessment of her development in thought and writing by the end of the course was quite simple: "When you read my paper now, you can tell this is a college student writing."

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The findings of the qualitative component of the research suggest that the adult second-language participants shared a number of experiences associated with their pursuit of higher education: a deep valuing of education; significant adjustments and sometimes personal crises as they moved into pursuit of higher education; and very positive impact on their current experience if they have had prior successful experiences in higher education. They referenced specific challenges as they began to work with the demands of academic writing, notably, tension

between their knowledge and their ability to express it and the demands of specialized content or types of writing required in particular academic areas. They explore a number of factors that they felt contributed significantly to their successful progress in the development of academic writing, including having a supportive network of family or mentors, reading and speaking in English, working with writing center tutors, participating in online discussion boards, working from models or templates in academic writing, and working in a learning environment characterized by high expectations and hard work. Most of their perceptions and experiences are congruent with what is suggested in literature in pertinent fields, but it also extends and deepens some of those understandings and sets up clear recommendations for practice, to be explored in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research study was two-fold: 1) to identify how adult ELL community college students perceive their experience in the development of academic literacy, specifically academic writing, and 2) to explore their perceptions of the factors, attitudes, and experiences that have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy. This chapter is in three sections: an analysis of themes in the findings and their relationship to various bodies of research; an overview of recommendations for practice; and a concluding section with the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

The research in this study was undertaken to answer two questions:

1. How do adult ELLs in community college curricular courses perceive the academic writing situations that they have experienced?
2. Among adult ELLs assessed by faculty to be successful in academic writing competency, what factors, attitudes, and experiences have facilitated their development of that level of academic literacy?

The quantitative research, 30 surveys of adult ELLs in community college, was primarily oriented to address the first question, providing descriptive data about these participants and some elements of how they perceived their academic writing situations. Because of the small sample size, the only data findings were frequency data, suggesting some descriptive information about this population. Overall, the quantitative data suggested that these adult ELLs were relatively confident in various kinds of academic writing situations, with the highest level of uncertainty being in relation to using Standard English. More than half the participants had experiences in relation to academic writing characterized by the idea “sometimes didn’t think I

would fit in and be able to complete writing assignments the right way.” Most, however, shared that, overall, they felt confident in their academic writing situations. In regard to those experiences that they found to be helpful in developing academic writing, most participants credited their college English classes (reading or composition) and the activity of “just reading.”

The qualitative research findings were based on the data from two semi-structured interviews with each of 11 adult ELLs recommended by community college faculty who found them to be capable writers. The purpose of this part of the research study was to address the second research question—that is, to explore in more depth the factors, attitudes, and experiences that had been influential in the participants’ development as college writers. Several themes emerged from the qualitative research suggesting that early support and encouragement for education, experiences that contributed to the development of persistence and determination, and specific experiences and practices in the academic environment were major factors for these participants in the development of academic writing.

This study is positioned at the intersection of several different bodies of literature, and the findings from this research, particularly from the qualitative data, confirm, extend, and otherwise inform the literature in several key areas. The most prominent of the bodies of literature informed by the finding of this study are those related to adult learning, community colleges and ELLs, situated cognition and communities of practice, and the Academic Literacies Model (ALM) and academic literacy.

Adult Learning

In many respects, an analysis of the findings that emerged from this study confirms and extends the existing understanding of adult learners and the adult learning experience in higher

education as well as suggesting aspects of the adult learning dynamic in relation to literacy that are only beginning to be considered in the literature.

The research done in this study with adult ELLs reinforces and deepens the existing understanding of the characteristics—even the distinctive characteristics—of adult learners. Several assumptions about the qualities of adult learners, grounded in the work of Knowles (1980), have been further confirmed and explored in more recent adult education literature (Kasworm, 2005; Kortesoja, 2009; Orem, 2005). Two of these assumptions are reflected in the findings of this study. First is the principle that an adult's readiness and motivation to learn are closely related to his or her social role and responsibilities. The second is that adults have a rich and varied pool of life experiences, and that they construct knowledge based on their prior experiences. Both of these undergirding principles for understanding adult learners are solidly supported and extended by this research.

Adult Social Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Learning

As is clear to anyone who has worked with them, adult learners often juggle a daunting range of social roles and responsibilities: parenting (often single parenting), working (often more than one job), filling roles in church and community groups, paying bills, managing a household, caring for multiple generations and extended family needs, attending college—and, in the case of the adult ELL participants, navigating the challenges of a relatively new language and academic work in that language (Chao, DeRocco, & Flynn, 2008; Kasworm, 2005; Spellman, 2007). Yet for many of the participants of this study, it is precisely the demands of these social roles and responsibilities that motivated them and shaped their readiness to learn. For several, the seriousness of certain life crises created for them an urgency in the development of more competence in English and was the primary driving force in their enrollment in

community college. They responded to the challenges and obstacles posed by their English study and early college work with exceptional persistence and determination, qualities that they attributed to their need to take care of their families in difficult situations. For example, Christine was a withdrawn “housewife” raising two small children with minimal interaction with the English-speaking world outside her home until two changes in social roles shifted her orientation and forced her to take on the challenge of learning English more fluently and pursuing education. The first change for her was her conversion to Christianity and her involvement in the Chinese Christian church in Pittsburgh, which encouraged her to be more involved in learning to speak English and interacting with others in English. The second major shift for Christine was her husband’s decision to leave the family after finishing his doctoral studies, forcing her into the role of sole parent, with the responsibility to provide for two young children. She reflected on the way that life experience shaped her as a learner, commenting on her motivation to enroll in college in order to gain job skills, “My focus was not me at all, my focus was a caregiver. My children—they were my focus and my duty.” The influence of Christine’s changes in social roles and responsibilities on her readiness and her drive to learn underscores that aspect of the nature of adult learners.

In much the same way, Linda attributed her drive for learning and her academic success to the maturity she developed as she raised her son as a single mother after separating from her child’s father with an infant to raise. Like Christine, Linda was forced into the life situation of being a single mother to her infant son when she was only twenty years old. Reinforcing the impact of this experience on her learning, she noted, “I had to grow up quickly. It wasn’t optional. When you think of it, I’m 25 years old, and in a matter of 25 years, I’ve done so much,

I've learned so much. And I tend to put everything I've learned and experienced into what I'm learning now and writing about.”

Prior Life and Learning Experiences

The second of the principles characterizing adult learners, the construction of knowledge based on prior experiences, is borne out in many of the experiences and comments emerging from the qualitative research.

Early Support and Encouragement for Education

Most of the participants drew from early life experiences that not only supported but encouraged their pursuit of education; whether by precept or example, early family experiences shaped their attitudes and drive for learning. Repeatedly, they attributed their passion for learning to these early experiences that engrained in them that education is the only thing that would enable them to make something of themselves. Halima quoted her parents as saying, “Without education, you are nothing.” Joseph remembered, “My father, and my sisters and brothers, they think education is very important ...very, very important.”

Prior Experience in Higher Education

In addition to early influences supporting education, several of the participants acknowledged drawing heavily upon prior experiences in higher education in their construction of knowledge and their development of academic literacy in their U.S. community college experiences. These experiences formed a solid foundation of confidence about their ability to negotiate higher education and academic writing as well as equipping them with an understanding of the expectations and standards of higher education. Their experiences in higher education can be seen as a form of cultural capital, first articulated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1989). Academic cultural capital is defined as the “knowledge and habits of the

socially valued practices of higher education” (Curry, 2004, p.53). Another way of thinking of this is that it is a comfort level with the practices and expectations of an academic environment (Brammer, 2002). In many respects, academic cultural capital is related to the second perspective or level of academic literacy posited by Lea and Street (1998), that of enculturation and confidence in the social and academic environment of higher education.

Several participants had prior experiences in higher education, and those experiences enabled them to approach college with familiarity and confidence. Even though this educational cultural capital was rooted in another language in their home countries, it became central to their ability to negotiate a new language, a new learning environment, and a new discipline of study. For Jeannette and Christine, having earned graduate degrees in their countries of origin, there was an element of frustration with the experiences of being “at the bottom of the educational ladder” in a new country, learning a new language, taking basic reading and writing. They all acknowledged the seminal value of their academic cultural capital as they approached their experiences in higher education. As Mona said very simply, referring to the impact of her prior educational experiences in nursing school in Germany, “I learned how to learn, and I knew that I could learn.”

Personal Background and Interests

Part of the dynamic of adult learning is that adult learners often have an extensive and rich background of experiences and interests that informs their experiences in the development of academic writing. This aspect of prior learning was important for several as they reflected on their construction of knowledge in academic literacy in relation to their personal backgrounds and the interests they developed. For example, Joseph understood the development of academic writing by drawing from his experience as a soccer player, and he framed his construction of

knowledge in academic writing with the metaphor of learning to play soccer, explaining that he learned to write from models in the same way that he learned to play soccer from studying the performance of Ronaldo, a premier international soccer player, noting, “So I went to soccer to figure out a way to improve my writing.”

Another participant, Zohreh, came to an understanding of an early 19th century British literature text, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft, by drawing from her experiences as a woman in Iran and systematically analyzed literature those terms. Similarly, she made meaning of her experiences in Iran by seeing them in the context of Wollstonecraft’s work. She noted, “I read the book, and each page that I was reading, I just took a note—something that was similar to Iran at this moment, at the present time.”

In the case of Eduard and Pilar, taking on the work of preparing materials for family legal petitions was a challenge they were pressed into because of a need, but for both it became pivotal in enabling them to move comfortably into specialized fields in college. For both of them, these experiences informed not only their choice of courses of study and professional preparation, but their success in those prior legal endeavors gave them the confidence that they could navigate the curricular work, the conceptual learning, and the distinctive writing and reading demands of those fields.

Prior Literacy Experiences and Discourse Communities

There is an aspect of life experiences in adults’ learning that has been only minimally explored--the role of prior literacies and previous involvement with discourse communities. One of the greatest challenges for higher education institutions and faculty as they work with adult learners (just as it is with traditional-aged students) may be tapping into the unique strengths, experiences, and literacies that they bring to their academic pursuits in college. As many have

noted, adult learners (and particularly adult ELLs) come to college from wide range of social, cultural, and educational contexts, and they come with a rich and varied range of literacies that they have practiced (Michaud, 2011).

This dynamic was certainly a distinctive influence on the participants in this research. In addition to their language and cultural diversity, they brought to their academic experience competence and fluency in a range of discourses and genres—creative writing of poetry (Pilar, Eduard, Zohreh), legal writing (Pilar and Eduard), nursing and medical genres of writing (Mona and Linda), literary criticism (Christine and Eduard), social work case writing (Christine), technical writing in mechanical technology (Ahmed), and business and marketing analysis (Jeannette). While the influence of prior literacies and discourse practices is certainly related to the principle of knowledge construction based on prior experience, the aspect of how antecedent discursive genres shapes learning is a relatively new field of inquiry and should provide a rich field for research (Bawarshi, 2008; Devitt, 2007).

There has been relatively little attention on this dynamic in either adult education literature or composition studies literature, but the impact of experience in prior discursive communities as an adult learner comes into college is coming into focus as a significant influence on the development of a new literacy (Michaud, 2011). Devitt (2007) refers to this experience, writing “The writer moving among locations carries along a set of writing experiences, including the genres acquired in those various locations. That set of acquired genres, that genre *repertoire*, serves as a resource for the writer when encountering an unfamiliar genre” (p. 220). The most likely range of these antecedent genres includes academic genres from prior school experiences, genres of writing produced in personal or community environments, and professional genres practiced on the job (Michaud, 2011).

Several of the participants in this study referenced experiences with antecedent genres in all of these areas—prior academic writing, personal writing, and professional writing. In their reflections on these writing experiences, they suggested some of the ways that these genres and literacy practices served as valuable resources for them as they moved into this academic writing environment. They did not simply transfer the genres or even specific skills, but they noted that the flexibility or dexterity they developed in learning to negotiate different discourses was a pivotal experience. Several of them eagerly shared their writing in other genres (poetry, drama, journaling, *pro se* legal work), speaking of how that type of writing deepened and broadened their comfort in English, their confidence and skill with rhetorical choices, their fluency of expression, and even the development of a new identity as a writer English. For example, Zohreh spoke of the experience of writing poetry as a bridge between her Iranian-Farsi life and her American life. She wrote poetry to share with her children pieces of her “Farsi” life in Iran, the coming together of two life experiences. The findings of this research inform the early work on rhetorical flexibility and the influence of antecedent genres in the literacy experiences of adult learners in community college.

ELLs and Community College Education

In addition to its relationship to the field of adult education and understanding adult learners, the research from this study of adult ELL community college students and the development of academic literacy supports and extends the contemporary research in community college ELL experiences. As research in a variety of contexts has suggested, community colleges are the primary path for higher education for the rapidly growing demographic of adult ELLs, and the findings of this study corroborate and explain that dynamic. Whether they had prior experiences in higher education or not, these participants found that community college

was the best (and in some cases, the only) viable avenue for more education and career opportunities. Several aspects of the research findings inform an understanding of ELLs in the community college environment. As is frequently reflected in the literature related to ELLs in community college, this research suggests that community colleges are the primary higher education avenues for adult ELLs because they provide more systematic and effective avenues for learning and strengthening English language skills (typically through credit-bearing ESL classes) as well as being an accessible avenue for the development of career and workforce training for an unusually heterogeneous higher education population.

The Role of Community College for English Language Learning

As has been often noted in the literature about adult ELLs in community college, the opportunity for ESL classes is a major factor in their enrollment (Connell, 2008; Conway, 2010; Curry, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2006; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). This was borne out in the experiences of many of the participants. In some cases, the need to learn English was the only reason they came to college because typically, community colleges offer extensive credit-based ESL classes that have a much greater scope than community-based adult education. College classes also fulfill the requirements for a visa and enable the student to receive financial aid, as in Jeannette's case. As is demonstrated in the literature and borne out in the findings of the study, often an adult ELL's first experience with an academic environment comes through ESL classes.

In the case of several of the participants, enrolling in college for academic study was not initially a part of their intent; they simply wanted to learn or improve their English, and they found that the community-based adult education ESL classes were inadequate for their needs, as has been well-documented in the literature (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). Several of the participants (Eduard, Zohreh, Christine, and Joseph) had initially worked

on their English in community-based adult education ESL classes and found the experience to be very limited in terms of the effectiveness for their needs. As Zohreh noted, “After three months, my teacher told me, ‘Zohreh, you should move to a higher level because these classes are not for you. You should go to [community college].’” Eduard had a similar experience, remembering, “After four months, I said, ‘This is not me, I’m not going nowhere with this.’ I went to Rockland County Community College.”

The need for stronger English language learning experiences drew them to community college which opened the pathway to higher education, a pattern that is supported in the literature on ELLs in community college. Zohreh, for example, had found college closed off for her in Iran, and she indicated that pursuing higher education here might have been too daunting had it not been for her need to learn English and fact that ESL was available in community college. Once she was successful in ESL classes on a college campus, she began to see possibilities for developing career skills with a certificate. After success in a certificate, she developed the vision of an associate and then a baccalaureate degree.

Clearly, the experiences of these participants support the research that suggests that development of English language proficiency is a substantial factor in drawing ELLs to study at community college (Curry, 2004). What is interesting in terms of the experiences of these participants is that though some enrolled with the intent of pursuing an academic degree, others came to community college with the simple intent to improve English proficiency and gradually developed other academic goals. In Zohreh’s case, that meant developing confidence and comfort in academics as well as English and shifting her sights to pursue a degree in secondary ESL education. The experience in community college ESL opened doors for further academic work.

The Role of Community College in Career and Workforce Preparation

Another role of the community college for adult ELL students that has been widely documented in the literature (Conway, 2010; Curry, 2004; Kinser & Deitchman, 2007; Prince & Jenkins, 2005; Spellman, 2007; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002) is to provide career and workforce training in an accessible, inexpensive, and flexible environment that enables students to balance family, job, and learning. Several of the participants enrolled in community college under the pressure of needing to quickly develop marketable career skills to support themselves and their family. They completed certificate programs for entry-level employment in a field that would provide a living wage, but all returned quickly to pursue further education and a more secure future.

In some cases, community college was the obvious choice because it was geographically accessible, financially accessible, and offered a more student-friendly, flexible, and non-intimidating environment for vulnerable adult ELLs. In Christine's case, shattered by the sudden break-up of her marriage and the burden of being a single mother with no job, she struggled with self-esteem and discouragement. Even though she had a graduate degree from a major university in China, the combination of her very limited English and the loss of her social role as a wife in the Chinese community destroyed her confidence. She said, "I managed to try and stand up. I could not even think of trying to go to university. I wanted to start from something that requires very little. I said that I'm going to go to community college. It was a big decision for me to go back to school."

These experiences shared by the participants indeed reflect the research in community college literature about the numbers of students who are initially drawn to study in community college for workforce and career training, even at the certificate level. Though there is relatively

little research about the transition of certificate students into AA programs and further education, the findings of this study would suggest that students expand their academic goals based on the prospect of higher level academic credentials (and better employment prospects) as well as confidence and success at the certificate and entry level. This gradual expansion of a learner's vision for him- or herself is one of the most valuable contributions of the community college, but it also underscores the academic and literacy challenges that an adult ELL faces as he or she transitions into an academic environment that earlier in life would not have even been considered.

The Heterogeneity of Adult ELLs in Community College.

The rapid growth in the number of adult ELLs in community college is a dynamic that higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, are struggling to deal with (Benesch, 2007; Connell, 2008; Conway, 2010; Curry 2004; Estrada, Dupoux, & Wolman, 2005; Leki, 2007; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). There are certainly a daunting array of challenges as institutions develop strategies for helping this particular student population to be successful: appropriate placement and assessment of their English, ESL pedagogy and curriculum, financial aid support, legal and visa counseling, social support services, etc. (Curry, 20004; Szelenyi, & Chang, 2002). What is universally recognized but seldom enters into the planning in the community college environment (both in student services and academic preparation) is the great diversity in the backgrounds and goals of adult ELLs. An understanding and accommodation for this diversity is fundamental to a community college's role in supporting their development of academic literacy. While what they have in common is their age and second-language status, their differences are myriad and argue for more sensitive and responsive resources, and, at the

very least, a more nuanced awareness of who they are and what their needs are. Certainly this increased awareness is at both the institutional and pedagogical level.

One of the needs at most community colleges at the institutional level is more attention to the progress and needs of the ELL student population. On the urban community college campus where this research was done, great attention and support is given to the large numbers of F-1 visa students, 196 students from 60 countries in spring 2010. There are other groups of adult ELLs, however, who are often lost in the college environment. For example, there are over 800 non-U.S. citizens on this campus, most of whom are second language students or ELLs, but there is no institutional way of even monitoring the numbers or progress of ELLs in general (referenced as “non-native speakers of English”). Some are enrolled in ESL classes, while many are not, as their English skills in reading and writing are assessed at placement testing as being above the ESL curriculum level. For students who test into ESL and take the courses indicated based on the placement testing, there are intense and focused classes and the development of something of a cohort experience that ends when they “graduate” into mainstream college courses. The participants in this who took ESL (five of the eleven) spoke often of “our ESL class” or “when I see and talk to friends from ESL classes” or “we all worked so hard together in ESL.” However, they also noted that the end of the ESL sequence meant the loss of a close support network with no particular resources to replace it.

ELLs who do not place into an ESL sequence, they are simply placed into general college courses, with no resources or avenues for addressing some of the unique problems that ELLs often face. For example, even for students who are not required to take ESL, English is often a struggle for them in their academic work, as well as in the navigation of complex academic processes (registration, financial aid applications, advisement and academic planning).

The heterogeneity of their life situations and needs is well-documented in research (Benesch, 2007; Connell, 2008; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007) and supported in the findings of this study. Besides their ELL language status and their ages as non-traditional or adult students, they are a very diverse group: race or ethnicity, languages of origin, family situations, immigration status, literacy or educational background, academic goals, employment status, socioeconomic status, access and comfort with technology, and cultural roots and traditions. At the institutional level, these students are often lost, especially those who do not come with a level of comfort in an academic environment. With no offices or services at most community colleges to serve as resources for ELL students and their wide range of life situations, the challenge of negotiating the academic culture can be overwhelming.

The community college which was the site of this research, like many other community colleges, has institutional data on F-1 visa students and ESL students, but no data or research related to second-language or ELL students. The assumption could well be that if they aren't on an F-1 visa and/or don't test into ESL, they are exactly like any other adult (or non-traditional) college students. However, the participants noted a wide range of frustrations in the environment related to their ELL experiences: relatively few tutors in the writing center who were comfortable with non-native speakers or knew how to work with their types of questions; no supplemental resources for further help with speaking (generally agreed upon as the last English skill to become confident in and the most challenging); highly variable faculty comfort-levels with students who have heavy accents or shyness to speak and participate; few resources to help them navigate the processes of the college (financial aid, registration, career office services, student employment services, transfer applications, professional licensing or certification). Even for those who came with academic cultural capital from previous higher

education experiences, the maze of offices, forms, and acronyms to be negotiated in a new language can be overwhelming; additionally, there are “college-survival” strategies that native-English speaking students are culturally comfortable with or know about that ELL students are unaware of. For the adult ELL in community college, new to higher education, the literature suggests that the position of being an outsider, far out on the margins of the academic and social community, makes it far more difficult to engage in the dynamic of learning and becoming part of that community (Conway, 2010; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Williams & Garcia, 2005).

This research would support the empirical as well as anecdotal data on the profiles and needs of adult ELL students that colleges are trying to identify and address, and it would argue for more thoughtful attention to the needs of the entire ELL population at community college, particularly in light of the heterogeneity of their life situations and needs.

Communities of Practice and Situated Cognition Theoretical Literature

The conceptual framework for this study is the Academic Literacies Model (ALM), developed in the late 1990s in the U.K. by researcher-practitioners Mary Lea and Brian Street. This model for understanding the nature and development of academic literacy draws from three bodies of research and literature: Communities of Practice and situated cognition, New Literacy Studies, and composition studies. Because of the relationship between this study and the ALM, findings are informed by a second theoretical framework, situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) and the concept of communities of practice, as posited by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991).

Situated cognition is a theory that is constructivist in nature and related to experiential learning, but it specifically casts learning as fundamentally grounded in the context in which learning occurs—the community, the tools, the discourse, and the activities inherent in the

specific and authentic situation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The obvious settings that illustrate situated cognition are in the workplace and professional education going back to the centuries-old experience of trade and craft apprenticeship. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) extended the understanding situated cognition into academic learning and outlined the concept of a cognitive apprenticeship, noting, “cognitive apprenticeship methods try to enculturate students into authentic practices through activity and social interaction” (p. 37).

Most specific to learning in higher education, and specifically the development of proficiency in academic writing, is the concept of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this conceptualization, which is grounded in the situated cognition, learning is highly contextualized, with learners interacting with the values, attitudes, activities, and culture of a specific and authentic community. Learning occurs through genuine participation in the activities and socialization of the community (Jawitz, 2007). There is a deeply engaged community of practitioners at differently levels of mastery; the community acts as a “living curriculum” for the apprentice (Wenger, 2006, sec.3). It is this model of learning, with the definition of a community of practice and the progression of legitimate peripheral participation, that is most illuminating and relevant in understanding the nature of developing proficiency in academic writing. Several findings from the research in this study reflect and confirm elements of this paradigm of learning, including the nature of a community of practice, the nature of a discourse community, and legitimate peripheral participation to full membership in a community of practice.

Nature of a Community of Practice

Wenger’s theoretical work established three characteristics of a community of practice: an identity defined by commitment and competence in a shared domain of interest; a

participation in joint activities with mutual support; and a shared practice—values, norms, attitudes, rules, discourse and style (Wenger, 1998). The knowledge that the members hold in common is explicit but also tacit, with tacit knowledge requiring interaction, coaching, and apprenticeship (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

One of the more recent applications of research in this field sees higher education, as well as domains within higher education, as communities of practice with distinct identities, knowledge, values, rules, and discourses (Bassot, 2005, Casenave, 2002; Cope, 2005; Jawitz, 2007; Macbeth, 2006; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Solomon, 2007). The argument has been made by O'Donnell and Tobbell (2007) that all students, but particularly adult students, who enroll in college are, in essence, entering an academic community of practice. As they noted, "Success in an education system can be thought of as full-participation—that is, individual adopt and perform the valued practices of that community..." (p. 315).

The findings of this research study support O'Donnell and Tobbell's findings and suggest that participants recognized that being successful in college and specifically in college writing involved to some extent in an experience of community. For example, in the quantitative findings, over half the respondents (56.7%) acknowledged that "I sometimes didn't think I would fit in and be able to complete writing assignments the right way." The nature of the question, however, did not give them an opportunity to explain why they felt they might not "fit in" (suggesting entering some sort of community) or what they perceived as completing writing assignments "the right way." The findings were simply that they perceived that there was some "fitting in" to do and that there was an accepted "right way" of doing things.

One of the more interesting aspects of the findings of the qualitative research was that the participants in the qualitative research seldom reflected a concern about being an "outsider" or

not “fitting in” as part of the college environment, as is sometimes suggested in the literature (Hassel & Giordano, 2009). Their only sense of moving into an academic discourse community (college-level writing) was in relation to skills in Standard English or “correctness,” though this concern has certainly been suggested in the literature (Zamel & Spack, 2006). Most of the participants expressed an understanding that there was a certain way that things were done in college classes and particularly in college writing. One who did was Jeannette, who spoke about the prospect of writing for a college-level class and said, “I knew the expectations of the professor.” Several others (Linda, Pilar, Zohreh, Christine, and Eduard) referenced wanting to do writing assignments the “right way” or the “proper way.” Even with the opportunity to explore in the interview the nature of “the proper way” or what was involved with becoming a college writer, they struggled to articulate any more of a specific sense of what was involved in a transition into an academic discourse community of practice. Within the paradigm of the Academic Literacies Model, of the three perspectives that Lea and Street (1998) note as characterizing approaches to or levels of academic literacy, the participants seemed to perceive academic writing only in terms of the first level, the skills perspective.

These qualitative findings suggest the need for more consideration of the perceptions of adult ELLs regarding the nature of academic environment as well as the process of developing confidence and competence in academic writing. One explanation for their puzzlement at the concept of fitting in or being able to meet the expectations could be that because these participants were chosen because of their successful development of academic writing competencies, they were not aware of barriers or an “insider/outsider” dynamic. Another potential explanation could be in the framing of the nature of the academic experience within the institutional setting. Particularly at the community college level, there is marked institutional

effort to create an environment in which coming to college an easy, comfortable, non-intimidating experience. There is a great deal of emphasis on eliminating any institutional, psychological, and academic barriers as a feature of maximizing student access to higher education. Inherent in this critical endeavor is the possibility that students are only vaguely aware that college is a community of students and teachers with common goals, common activities, as well as a common way of doing some things (reading skills, written genres, etc.). It is possible that many community college faculty and administrators fear creating the sense of a community which might be perceived as a construct that many are excluded from (“outsiders”).

An alternate way of framing the experience the experience for students, a perspective that is congruent with the Academic Literacies model and the Communities of Practice (situated cognition), is that college is a community that offers experiences to all students so that they may gain access to it and move from being novices to full participation. If students perceived their entry into college as movement into a new community, it is possible that they would be more able to understand and articulate the nature of that community and the nature of its discourse.

Nature of a Discourse Community

Since Lave and Wenger (1991) define a shared discourse as an attribute of a community of practice, it is appropriate that higher education as a community of practice would have a distinctive discourse—academic discourse, or, for the purposes of this study, academic writing. For Lave and Wenger (1991) discourse within a community of practice is key to participation and, by extension, to learning. The discourse of the community is not simply a tool to transmit knowledge; it is a central practice of the community and inherent in the enculturation of a novice (O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). Some research, in fact, has identified learning and gaining

fluency and control in academic reading and writing as a “discourse apprenticeship” (Cope, 2005, p. 50).

The participants in this study were novices in the academic community of practice at many levels. They were adults, referenced by O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007) as having more challenges in negotiating entry into the academic community of practice. They were also ELLs, with the prospect of negotiating a transition into a new community of practice and a new discourse community (new even for native speakers of English) in language that was new to them (in some cases less than a year-and-a-half of experience in English). Despite these potential barriers, the participants in the study did not identify any particular concerns or even awareness of a transition to a new discourse environment or interactions that would engage them in that community.

However, a number of participants did recognize that they had to learn “what was expected” in college writing, likely the process that Bartholomae (1986) outlined when he said, “The student has to learn to speak our language” (p. 39). It is possible that what the participants identified as “what was expected” or “proper” or “the right way” in academic writing was actually their acknowledgement that college classes have a particular way of speaking, writing, and thinking. Though only one participant actually articulated a sense of learning to write like a college student, most had a sense that there was a “proper” way to write. For most participants, “the proper way” included a focus and a well-signaled organization, research and factual information to support assertions, correct documentation, and correctness in Standard English. Two of the qualitative participants referenced needing to learn to do research the “proper” way, using library databases and articles in journals. For several others, like Jeannette, the “proper” was characterized by accurate and consistent use of Standard English, and she expressed her

greatest challenge to overcome in writing in these terms, saying, “I would do all types of mistakes—structure, sentences, grammar, punctuation...this is something about writing that is very, very hard.”

Legitimate Peripheral Participation to Full Membership

In Lave and Wenger’s model, the novice in the community of practice functions on the periphery with minimal responsibility but functions authentically and productively, engaging in purposeful ways with the other members of the community (1991). It is this “legitimate peripheral participation” that enculturates him or her and provides entry into the community and a pathway to full membership.

Acquiring membership in a discourse community entails a process that may seem very subtle. Often this transition is framed in the metaphor of “outsiders” gradually becoming “insiders” (Mlynarczyk, 2006). One way of seeing this is to say that

students entering a new community must take on its ways of knowing and its ‘ways with word.’ The idea of a culture suggests the kind of immersion, engagement, contextualization, and fullness of experience that is necessary for someone to be initiated into and to be conversant in that culture” (Zamel, 1993, p. 188).

As noted earlier, most of the participants in this study did not seem to be explicitly aware of a college community of practice or have a sense of a discourse community beyond the expectations of basic features of academic writing, often characterized as “the right way” or the “proper” way—organization of an essay (introduction, body, conclusion, paragraph topic sentences, etc.) and Standard English usage (punctuation, spelling, grammatical correctness, sentence structure).

One of the difficulties with this sense on the part of the participants is that it casts the entire experience of academic writing in the context of there being a single “right way” or “proper” way to write, and it is defined by essay organization and punctuation. This paradigm has the dual effect of creating a sense of walls or barriers (“There’s a ‘right’ way to do things, but I’m not sure what it is.”) and at the same time not communicating that there is more to successful academic writing than a three-paragraph essay and correct punctuation.

One exception was Halima, who reflected on her experiences in learning to do academic writing in English composition classes, specifically her growth between English 051 (basic or developmental composition) and English 101 (college composition). Although at first she referenced largely surface rhetorical features of her writing, she also seemed to intuit a sense of transition into a different level of discourse. She explained, referencing the contrast between an 051 paper and a 101 paper, “When you read my paper, you can tell this is a college student writing. It is different than 051. There’s difference in how I develop my points, the way I think, and the way I explain my ideas—the more complex ideas, the word choice, the grammar, the style, the sentence structure...all of those things.”

Two of the participants, however, had academic experiences in their curricula that engaged them much beyond general academic writing or general academic discourse, but enculturated them into a distinct pre-professional discourse community and a community of practice, with the associated confidence and sense of identity in that world. For example, both Pilar and Eduard, students in the Paralegal Studies program, experienced a community of practice at several different levels—an academic program that was part of the higher education community but was also a specific program that prepared them to enter the professional community of practice of paralegals. They were both aware that as they gained confidence and

fluency in the discourse (reading, writing, speaking) associated with Paralegal Studies they were developing a level of mastery in that academic realm; however, they also acknowledged that after graduation and entering the profession, there would be another process of being a novice and “learning the ropes” before acquiring mastery and “really belonging.”

Both Pilar and Eduard’s experiences were consistent with the empirical and conceptual literature related to communities of practice and discourse communities in several aspects. Pilar commented that part of the enculturation into the discourse of the legal community was reading legal cases—definitely an experience of immersion as she referenced reading a case hundreds of times and spending time becoming exposed to the language and discourse of case law. Speaking of the development of written discourse in the academic and professional genres required in the program and the field, Pilar noted again the value of simple exposure—“doing a lot of reading.” She spoke of her awareness of the connection between writing and membership in a professional community, saying, “To actually do the writing [of complaints, wills or case briefs], you have to take a lot of information, look at who will read it and what they need, look at the structure that is needed, and then translate the information into legal language and sentence structure because that’s what the profession requires.” For her, the enculturation was a process. “At first, I saw samples of wills, but it was all very confusing. But after [I wrote] the first one and you see the mistakes that you made, and then you see the correction, it all makes more sense. That helps a lot, and then you know you’ll be able to do a will without a problem next time.”

Eduard echoed the experiences outlined by Pilar—immersion in reading, becoming familiar with the genre, writing, revising, writing another, etc. Eduard referenced a particular class and how it shaped his transition into the academic and professional community of discourse, saying, “It was in the Family Law class that I had to start writing complaints. That is

when I learned to write. I had to learn the structure and the concepts and the logic. And when I did, that is what made me able to write.”

Other participants referenced experiences with writing that reflected to some extent the entry of a novice into a discourse community, but rather than simple “college writing,” they were always related to specialized disciplinary material and writing genres, like research writing in Psychology (Jeannette and Christine), technical writing in statics and mechanical engineering technology (Ahmed), and literary analysis (Zohreh). Based on the findings of the qualitative research in this study, that the participants who experienced the dynamic associated with entry into a community of practice or a discourse community were those who were engaged in a focused and well-defined academic program and were aware of the distinctive qualities of the program and the writing required by that profession or discipline. All of the elements of discourse (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) were tightly related, specialized, and recursive, as well as being idiosyncratic to that field. These participants also expressed great confidence in their “belonging” to the community, though not in academic terms. Pilar noted, “I feel like I’m part of the Paralegal ‘Club’.” For Zohreh, it was a different “club,” but the sense of identity and confidence was equally evident, when she commented on her immersion in reading 19th century British literature, “It was so hard. I liked this class because I learned a lot! And now I know how to translate the poems, because some are so confusing, so hard to understand. I am happy in this class because now if I read a poem from 19th century, I am a person who can understand it. So I am happy.”

It is interesting that most of the participants didn’t recognize or articulate a sense of community related to academic writing. They had a sense that an essay or a research paper had to be a certain way (introduction, thesis, paragraph topic sentences, factual support,

documentation, Standard English usage), but they thought of this as “right” or “proper.” Except for Halima, they didn’t seem to have a sense of membership or identity in an academic environment by virtue of their discourse. They didn’t think of themselves explicitly as “college writers” or express that they felt they were becoming part of a particular group or community. This may have been related to the efforts of the institution to help them feel comfortable and in an environment with no barriers or “gate-keeping.” It may also have been related to the constructs of their writing classes and the way that writing experiences were framed in their writing classes, with an emphasis on openness and acceptance rather than transitions into a new repertoire of literacies. The ones who had a clear sense of identity with a particular discourse were those who identified with the specialized reading and writing in disciplinary genres. Those experiences were described as challenging but significant in shaping a sense of identity and membership in an academic community.

There are two particular aspects in which these findings inform the theoretical and practical understandings of the theory of Communities of Practice. One is that while a cognitive apprenticeship is a recognized element in the communities of practice model (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989), it may be a more difficult and ambiguous type of apprenticeship to define and for the novice to recognize. Similarly, while the concept of a discourse community is widely recognized as a type of community of practice (Bizzell, 2000; Macbeth, 2006), the definition and delineation of a discourse community is much more subtle and uncertain for novices (or even the established members of the discourse community) than a more distinct and concrete professional or trade community of practice. The necessity for clarity and explicitness in communicating the nature of the discourse community is clearly an aspect that impacts the legitimate peripheral participation of new members.

The other aspect of the findings that inform the theoretical and practical understandings of the Communities of Practice model is the role of explicitness in the experience of the learner. In the centuries-old tradition of apprenticeships in trades or skills, the novice was conscious of the undertaking to become part of a community of practitioners and was aware of the benchmarks of his or her learning and development within the community from legitimate peripheral participation to increasing mastery. The undertaking of an apprenticeship carried within it the acceptance of an identity as a novice in a particular community as well as the intent to proceed to positions of mastery in the community. Rather than communicating a sense of barriers or exclusion, this awareness was empowering as the novice became part of the group and added a range of competencies to his or her repertoire of skills.

It is possible that the same type of awareness of the entry into the community of college students and discourse community of college-level writers could be similarly empowering for novices in academia. Rather than communicating a sense of exclusion or inaccessibility, understanding the development of academic literacy as community of practice could help new students recognize the role of the expectations and see themselves as valued new members developing additional rhetorical repertoires and literacies.

Literacies and the Development of Academic Literacy

Another body of research and conceptual literature that is informed to some extent by this study is that related to literacy or more specifically “literacies,” as articulated as part of New Literacy Studies. Certainly the term “literacy” is used in a variety of ways and levels of use from the more straightforward (learning to read and write in a specific language) to being able to negotiate and use discourse in specific situations or communities. In this context, “academic literacy” is one of the literacies that learners negotiate as a part of moving into academic study.

Literacies

James Paul Gee, a scholar in New Literacy Studies and an influential voice in the development of the Academic Literacies Model, conceptualized literacy or literacies in relation to the nature of discourse. Gee sees discourse as more closely associated with the development of identity within a context or community. One way of explaining discourse is “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaning group or a social network” (Gee, 1998, p. 51). It is, in essence, an “identity kit” that enables a member of a community or group to speak, think, and act in congruence with other members of the community. It is an “identity kit” that includes speaking, writing, doing, being, valuing, and believing. (Delpit, 1993, p. 208). In this understanding, literacies are “social practices and always embedded in social and cultural contexts,” grounded in the discourse of specific situations and communities (Hirst, Henderson, et al, 2004, p.68). Each new context involves a new literacy or a new phase of a literacy, the development of a repertoire of literacy practices (ways of reading, writing, and interacting).

This research study addresses the development of literacies at several levels. First, of course, is the straightforward and basic sense of literacy as simply being able to read and write in a language and to control that use of language meaningfully. Since the population of this research study was limited to ELLs, each of the participants in both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study has developed literacy in a second, third, or fourth language by simply learning the English language at a relatively high level of proficiency. Many of the participants have fluency and literacy in several languages, including one or two “home” or provincial languages in addition to official or national languages of their countries of origin (Halima, Joseph, Eduard). Their development their literacy in English followed various

patterns, which in some cases influenced their transitions into the classroom and academic writing. For several interview participants, English was a language that they learned at least to some extent as children or teenagers. While some of them still placed into ESL classes, in their conversations about their confidence and comfort in English, they never indicated any significant frustration with their ability to communicate or function socially or academically in English. It is very possible that in addition to the basic principle in much L2 research, that learners who study a different language at younger ages learn more quickly and are more comfortable with it, there is another element to this. It could be that the participants who began to learn English at younger ages perceived English as part of their repertoire of languages, and they began early to develop a comfort-level with linguistic flexibility or dexterity as part of how they interacted.

Other participants learned English as adults, and their development of the elements of basic literacy in English came much later. Christine learned to read English in her teenage years in school in China, but speaking and writing in English was something that she didn't really develop until her undergraduate and graduate college-level studies. Several learned English as adults (for Zohreh, in her forties). Each of these participants spoke often of the difficulty and intense effort required in ESL classes and their current frustration in their academic work with limited vocabulary, limited confidence in speaking in class, difficulty in reading challenging disciplinary content, and writing in disciplinary contexts in English. For them, not just English but the experience of multiple languages for different contexts was not a part of the social, cultural, and intellectual identity that they grew up with.

In addition to developing literacy in its most basic sense (simply reading and writing at a college-level in English), these participants had to write in different genres and develop a range or repertoire of literacy practices or literacies, varying according to the contexts of their lives and

academic studies. Several participants noted that they loved and were very engaged in personal journal writing or creative writing (poetry). Those who completed the ESL sequence did autobiographical writing and other kinds of personal narrative. All had worked with the genre of the personal essay, while most had done argument and documented research writing in English composition classes as well as other (sociology, business law, psychology, English literature). In addition, many had studied curricula with distinct discourses, requiring them to adapt to different literacy practices in both reading and writing. Although they didn't define those experiences as "new literacy practices" or new "literacies," they recognized that they had to learn a new "language," "a different way of writing," and a different way of thinking, whether it was technical writing in mechanical engineering (Ahmed), lab writing for biology (Zohreh), medical research and writing (Mona and Zohreh), psychological research design and writing (Jeannette and Christine), literary research and analysis (Zohreh), or legal documents (Pilar and Eduard). Without really recognizing what they were engaged in and without realizing the significance of their development of comfort and confidence in multiple literacy situations, they were, in fact, developing "rhetorical dexterity" (Carter, 2008).

Of particular interest are the ways the participants negotiated writing in multiple academic genres and literacies (reading, writing, thinking) at the same time they were developing and extending confidence at the level of basic reading/writing literacy in English. While they were not able in the interview settings to explain the cognitive or contextual dynamic of this development, some of their responses suggested the nature of that experience. For Mona, having spoken English for only two years, one of the great challenges was being a student in a course in obstetrical nursing, especially understanding the lecture and taking notes. She reflected on that interaction of two levels of literacies, saying, "It was hard...so hard...so hard." She was

negotiating basic reading and writing in English while also negotiating the professional medical discourse genres in an aspect of nursing practice that she was relatively unfamiliar with.

Zohreh had a similar experience studying biology as part of a certificate program in phlebotomy, reflecting on her experiences negotiating specialized content and writing requirements (lab reports) having spoken English for less than two years, “I remember maybe ten hours, nine hours a day, I had my table and my paper and my books were here on the table, and I just writing and finding a new word. It was hard!”

Christine and Jeannette also experienced the dilemmas of trying to negotiate two levels of literacy practices at the same time, and both reflected on the frustrations of working with complex material and specialized academic genres recognizing that their language levels did not match their understanding of the content. They often had to compromise the sophistication of their idea development because of limitations in English expression. For example, Jeannette, who was solidly professionally and academically grounded in the subject matter in French, indicated,

I remember when I was doing an essay on outsourcing. I had to write about an economic part, but I was, ‘Oh my god, it’s too complicated for me [in English]. I’m not able to read it in English; I’m not able to write in the right way in English.’ So I just remove this part from my essay.

Based on the experiences of these participants, the process of developing confidence and control in a specialized academic discourse, while simultaneously working to become proficient in English, is often difficult and discouraging.

The Development of Academic Literacy

The final area of research and conceptual literature that is informed by the findings of this research study is academic discourse and the development of academic literacy. This research and the findings of this study are central to the purpose of the study and addressing the research questions.

As the nature of the development of literacy or multiple literacies is closely related to the concept of discourse, the first consideration is how the findings confirm or extend ideas in the literature that are associated with the nature of academic discourse, academic writing, or college-level writing.

Academic Discourse.

One of the interesting ironies in the field of composition studies that was confirmed and extended in the findings of this study is the relative difficulty and ambiguity in defining the nature of “academic discourse” or “college-level writing.” Though “characterizations of the academy as a culture, its language practices as discourses, and its constituents as communities” are not unusual (Macbeth, 2006, p. 180), it has been extremely difficult to define specifically those discourses and language practices that the community members negotiate (Bizzell, 2000). Phrases like “the modes of expression that have been conventionalized” or the “shared habits of mind” are frequently used (Macbeth, 2006, p 180). At a general level, the definition offered by Bartholomae (1986) seems to be widely accepted: “The student has to learn to speak out language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (p. 39). However, the problems occur with the effort to pin down a set of specific attributes of that discourse and expectations that delineate what “college-level” writing is (Blanton, 2004;

Casenave, 2002; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Macbeth 2006; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). As Mutnik (2011) expresses it, "...We seem unable as a discipline to agree on any definition of 'college-level writing.'" (p. 325). Audience, focus and organization, style, purpose, relationship to text, and Standard English usage (or Edited American English) seem to be alluded to frequently in discussions, but more transparency or specificity than that is difficult to find (Sullivan, 2006).

The findings of this research reflect this difficulty in delineating the nature of what is expected as the essence of "college-level writing" or academic discourse. The interview participants were vague and somewhat frustrated when asked what they perceived was expected of college-level writers. Often they shrugged or shared that perhaps it was "writing the right way," with no clearer sense of what the "right way" entailed other than correct grammar and punctuation and using the right format or organization. If experts in the field of composition studies and practitioners in writing pedagogy at the college level have difficulty characterizing academic writing or academic discourse with precision, the adult ELLs in this study certainly shared that.

Academic Literacy.

When the nature of the discourse of the academy (alternately referenced as academic writing or college-level writing) is not clearly or explicitly defined, the framing of what is needed to successfully participate in that discourse (academic literacy) and the development of that capacity is problematic. There has been increasing research in composition studies in the last twenty-five years that addresses these considerations (Bartholomae, 1986; Bizzell, 2000; Blau, 2006; Elbow, 1991; Hassell & Giordano, 2009; Kutz, 2004; Lunsford, 2006; Macbeth, 2006; Mlynarczyk, 2006; Rose, 1985; Williams & Garcia, 2005). That literature is thoughtful, reflective, inclusive, and multifaceted, informed by a number of different theoretical and

pedagogical lenses. However, it is inconclusive regarding what is involved in the development of academic literacy, and most acknowledge that there is minimal substantive knowledge of the processes by which students develop the capacity to write successfully in academic environments (Spack, 1997). Even with all the recent energy and lively discussion in the scholarly literature on the development nature and development of academic literacy, there is remarkably little consensus on the process by which students develop competency and confidence in negotiating the challenges of academic writing.

Experiences that Facilitate the Development of Academic Literacies

The findings of this study address this contested area of understanding and practice—what is the process of developing academic literacy and what experiences facilitate that development. For the participants in the qualitative portion of this study, the nature or characteristics of college-level writing or academic writing was puzzling and uncertain, but they seemed more confident in articulating the experiences that they found to be significant in helping them negotiate the challenges of the writing experiences required in their academic work. The participants' experiences reflected a number of the different perspectives in the literature and to some extent extended the understandings suggested in the literature.

One of the formative factors that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative data was the value of reading as a powerful resource in the development of academic writing for the participants. Certainly the literature in the development of academic literacy speaks of reading as a natural partner in the development of academic writing (Curry, 2004; Zamel, 2004; Kutz, 2004). Among the survey participants, when given the opportunity to indicate any activities that they perceived as valuable in their developments of academic writing, the activity with the highest percentage of students noting its value was “simply reading”—76.7% of participants or 23

of 30. Among the interview participants, many commented extensively on their immersion in reading—for pleasure and for learning in general, and for support in academic work. Pilar, for example, spoke of immersion in reading legal cases as critical in helping her understand the discourse and requirements of her writing, often reflecting models of the type of writing required in the discipline and the profession. Zohreh spoke of painstaking work to read and assimilate discipline-specific material in English in order to write an academic paper. For Eduard, the value of reading as a cognitive partner to academic writing was simple: “If I don’t read, it isn’t going to be in my mind to write it.” All the interview participants referenced reading as a way of strengthening their English (vocabulary, sentence structure), but even more importantly as a way of learning and assimilating ideas and ways of thinking that would inform their writing.

Another experience that emerged from the data as valuable in contributing to the development of confidence and competence in academic writing was engagement in a specific pre-professional or specific disciplinary writing practice. This factor is also noted in the literature, specifically in the context of engaging students in authentic learning experiences and literacy activities (Kutz, 2004; Curry, 2004). While the idea of academic discourse or academic literacy as a practice was vague or non-existent for participants whose college writing experience was largely in English composition classes or entry level general education classes, the sense of what characterized good writing in pre-professional or disciplinary courses was much clearer. Furthermore, these participants had a much stronger sense of membership in an authentic community of practice or discourse community, and they shared feeling much more empowered in situations where a strong and consistent disciplinary reading-writing discourse was inherent in the experience. This was evident even in the lower division experience of participants Pilar and Eduard in Paralegal Studies, Zohreh in literature, Mona in health care, and Ahmed in technical

writing for mechanical engineering technologies. The common denominators of these experiences were clearly defined and explicit written genres; style, and vocabulary grounded in the disciplinary content and purposes; challenging reading in the genres and content of the discipline that was reflected in the writing experiences; a sense of interaction and even negotiation of the novices with the other members of the community. In light of the three perspectives on academic literacy posited by Lea and Street (1998), the participants who had meaningful engagement in a distinct disciplinary written literacy practices experienced academic literacy as including standard English skills, enculturation into the social environment of higher education, and the development of an identity within the community and the ability to “deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices” (p. 159) or “rhetorical dexterity” (Carter, 2008).

A final element that was identified as facilitating confidence and capability in academic writing was experience with explicit models illustrating the expectations for the genres and writing situations. The findings of this research address the value of models to clarify the expectations and characteristics of academic writing assignments.

Part of the value of models of academic writing is based on one of the features inherent in a community of practice—tacit as well as explicit knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991) recognize the interplay of visibility and invisibility in the learning experience of novices and their access to more full participation in the community of practice, coming to understand the necessary balance of tacit and explicit knowledge. As noted by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), “We are all aware that ‘we know more than we can tell’....The tacit aspects of knowledge are often the most valuable. Sharing tacit knowledge required interaction and informal learning processes such as storytelling, conversation, coaching, and apprenticeship....Even explicit knowledge is dependent on tacit knowledge to be applied” (p. 9).

The experience of academic newcomers struggling to discern the core principles of discourse communities has been well documented in the literature (Casanave, 2002; Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Macbeth, 2006). As noted by Macbeth (2006), “few studies of teaching and learning academic writing consider the unspoken, taken-for-granted assumptions and competencies that underlie conventional object (e.g. thesis statements, main ideas, evidence, etc.)” (p. 180). As noted in Lillis and Turner (2001),

A recurring theme in a study setting out to explore the writing experience of a group of non-traditional students in higher education is that of student confusion about what’s required in their academic writing. Whilst student-writers knew that they were expected to write within a particular configuration of conventions, they were constantly struggling to find out what these conventions were. [Yet] such conventions are treated as if they were ‘common sense’ and communicated through wordings as if these were transparently meaningful (p. 58).

It is the existence of this tacit knowledge (what is referenced and expected to be known) that often creates uncertainty and anxiety for students.

In the experience of the participants of this study, their perceptions of their lack of access to tacit knowledge often created confusion and frustration. For example, Christine spoke earnestly about a draft of writing developed for her course in research methods in psychology, explaining, “Here is something I wrote for my academic paper for my psychology class. The professor expected us to do an experimental research design, and we had just begun the class. I don’t know what she wants or what it should be like. I know it has a language and style and format that I don’t know. I’m afraid it won’t be right.”

Christine was certainly not alone in her frustrations, as many of the participants echoed those concerns. However, several also shared experiences that helped them de-mystify the expectations of academic writing, experiences that helped to make the implicit explicit—the use of models of written academic genres. Most of the participants noted very positive responses to having models of written genres to illustrate the expectations for academic writing, models that they can follow in the early stages of their transition into academic writing. For example, Joseph, drawing on his experience as a soccer player in Africa, captured the essence of the dynamic that makes tacit knowledge explicit when he explained,

When I tried to improve my writing, I would always talk to my teacher and say, ‘I need some examples because I think that examples are a better way to improve. When she give me some example, I’ll go through the examples to create mine. I could change things, but I take it as a model. Like when I play soccer, I need to watch somebody else. If I do something that Ronaldo did before, then I wouldn’t say it was mine. But when I create my own from what I learned from him, that is good. My own version of it....But I can’t create from nothing. Maybe it’s possible, but I don’t think so. You always need something that someone did before...to take a model and try to improve.

Joseph’s analogy and insight confirms and in some ways extends the conclusions drawn by Carroll (2002): “Professors may think of explaining and modeling what is expected in literacy tasks as hand-holding or remedial work. In fact, this support helps students bridge the gap between what they can already do and the new tasks they face in college.”

While the challenges are real for all new college students, and particularly adult ELLs, as they work to meet the demands of complex academic literacy tasks, both the literature and the

findings of this research suggest that there are critical factors, attitudes, and experiences that facilitate that development.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This research study exploring the development of academic literacy in adult community college ELLs both confirms and informs bodies of literature in adult learning, community colleges' work with adult ELLs, communities of practice, literacy, and academic discourse and academic literacy. However its most clear and explicit implications come as recommendations for practice, particularly pedagogical practice in community college for facilitating the development of academic literacy among adult ELLs.

Because of the nature of this study at the intersection of a number of bodies of literature, there are a large number of areas that could be addressed with the recommendations, including institutional awareness, monitoring, and support for all ELLs, curricular and pedagogical strengthening for ESL programs, and curricular innovations at the institutional level (e.g. learning communities for ELLs). However, there are four broad recommendations drawn from the finding of the study that are focused on academic services and classroom pedagogy in basic writing and college-level composition courses. These recommendations are intended to address the development of academic literacy in adult ELLs in community college.

Support for Continued Development of English Fluency

As many of the interview participants noted, their continued development in English was an area of concern or even anxiety that often inhibited their participation in classes and limited their academic writing development. Whether it was Jeannette's frustration with her errors and lack of fluency in English in relation to her content knowledge or Mona's self-consciousness in her class participation, one of the frequent wishes articulated was support for continued

development of English proficiency. As noted by Zamel and Spack (2006), “Contrary to what many faculty may assume about linguistic competence, language is not a decontextualized skills that is learned once and for all time....Rather, the acquisition of language and academic literacies—which, too, are languages—is a long-term and evolving process” (p. 137). Simply because a student has completed ESL study (or has not been required to take ESL) does not mean that a student is as fluent in speaking, listening, reading, and writing as a native speaker of English (Zamel & Spack, 2006). The findings of this study suggest two aspects of support for continued development of English fluency.

One recommendation was that there should be post-ESL opportunities to refine speaking fluency and confidence at a level that would enable the students communicate at a college level and in an academic context. All of the participants in the interviews voiced that speaking was the slowest of the four major language skills for them to develop and the one that they felt most insecure and uncomfortable with. They realized, however, that their ability to communicate and participate in class discussions was central to their learning and integration into the learning dynamic. One way to address this concern would be having conversational opportunities and tutoring in speaking through the college’s learning center with professional or peer tutors, as offered by Mona.

The other suggestion, reiterated by several participants and supported by research, is that faculty in all classes (not just English reading or writing classes) should be trained and encouraged to use strategies to converse with ELL students and bring out their ideas in discussions (Zamle & Spack, 2006). For example, Jeannette shared,

I would have appreciated that my professor would ask me more questions. My English professor did this. I was feeling so happy and I was talking all the time in this class. I

was so thankful at the end of the semester because I got to be part of a class, I got to participate. I feel important, so I was more motivated to learn and was more motivated to write. Most professor don't ask you questions because they know that you're not very comfortable, but I don't think that this is really helping the student.

This may require patience, respect for every student's ideas and input, and the subtle skills of restating a student's comments if there is a sense that not all of the other students might understand and be able to build on those insights. However, clearly, based on these participants' reflections, supporting spoken interactions in class facilitates academic confidence and competence.

Integration of Reading and Writing

The second area of recommendations for practice emerging from the findings of the study and the related literature is the importance of integrating academic reading and writing in all classes. As excruciatingly slow it may be for ELLs to read academic material in a language they are still learning, the interaction of these two critical language competencies is critical (Zamel & Spack, 2006). Students need the experience of having their writing informed by reading and their reading comprehension informed by the meaning-making that emerges from writing. Depending on their prior experiences in higher education (academic cultural capital), they may need “instruction in the foundational reading practices that support academic writing in the disciplines, such as reading and analyzing academic texts, taking notes, consulting a dictionary, using library resources, creating bibliographies, and avoiding plagiarism” (Curry, 2004).

However, most of the participants recognized the positive impact of reading in their development of academic literacy—immersion in discipline-based reading, the integration of reading and writing, and writing experiences that require critical analysis and integration of reading in a complex meaning-making experience. Whether it was reading for pleasure, reading

in professional genres, or reading to integrate perspectives into writing, participants found reading to be central in their development of writing.

Development of Rhetorical Dexterity

Another recommendation for practice that is clear from the way that the findings of the study and relevant research inform each other is the development of rhetorical dexterity (Carter, 2008) or rhetorical adaptability (Hassel & Giordano, 2009). The challenge for both faculty and students lies in the fact that it has proved virtually impossible for practitioners and scholars in composition to define a single, monolithic standard of what college-level writing or academic literacy is. At the same time, it is increasingly obvious that the ability for students to function capably in the reading and writing requirements of higher education is absolutely critical to their success. It is also clear that most academic and/or professional disciplines have specific reading-writing contexts, with no reasonable way to teach students each discourse as a separate and independent experience.

The recommendation here arises from the Academic Literacies Model, with the fundamental principle that all literacy practices are contextual and situated. What is required is that students understand this and can recognize and learn to negotiate writing in different discourse communities with greater flexibility and dexterity. Carter (2008) defines rhetorical dexterity as “a pedagogical approach that develops in students the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice” (p. 14). There are several elements inherent in developing a pedagogy that supports rhetorical dexterity, among them encouraging students to integrate their prior experiences and literacies as a foundation for new learning; creating opportunities for students to write in

different registers and for different contexts; constructing authentic communities of practice in disciplinary writing; and providing meaningful, thoughtful feedback.

Writing Informed by Prior Life Experiences.

The first of these strategies is foundational in adult learning theory: to recognize that adults make meaning based on the foundation of prior life experiences (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). Certainly this was the case with the participants who were most deeply engaged in academic writing when they connected the disciplinary content with their life experiences. For example, Zohreh wrote a focused and mature analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* in the context of her experiences as a woman in Iran. Linda wrote a research paper in Sociology on financial aid as a factor in access to higher education grounded in her experiences as a single mother struggling with financial aid restrictions. Other participants brought into their development of academic literacy the academic cultural capital of prior higher education experience. As Mona summarized, "If you haven't done education, you're going to have to learn how to learn." They brought with them not just content or disciplinary knowledge, but the discipline, work ethic, and focus that enabled them to be successful in their class work. Ahmed brought to his study in mechanical engineering technologies a lifetime of work as a machinist, and his technical writing and his tutoring of technical writing in statics was enriched by that life experience. It is a valuable pedagogical practice not only to recognize the nature of an adult's prior life experiences but to allow and encourage adult learners to draw upon and integrate themes from previous life experiences in their literacy practices.

Writing in Different Registers and Contexts

The second of the strategies to help students develop academic dexterity is the creation of opportunities for students write in different registers and contexts. Peter Elbow (1991) argues

convincingly that non-academic writing is central to the development of human discourse as well as the ultimate development of a richer and better grounded academic literacy. Journal writing, among other types of writing that is not strictly applicable in academic disciplines allows learners to work with persona, point of view, multiple perspectives, and the process of making meaning (Mlynarczyk, 1998). Several of the participants in the study (Pilar, Zohreh, Linda, and Eduard) wrote poetry and journals for personal satisfaction but recognized the richness of insight as well as language development that they gained.

Another register for writing is in an online context, with the expectations and interactions characteristic of online discussions. There is certainly research explores the value of online interactions to strengthen and extend student adoption of discourse practices (Carpenter, Brown, & Hickman, 2004; Lea, 1998; Lea, 1998). Participation in an online discussion activity (whether in an online course, a hybrid course, or a traditional course with online discussions used as enrichment) has a number of strengths as a resource in writing, partly because in order to participate the student has to write, and yet it is considered low stakes writing and thus more accessible and comfortable for novice academic writers. It is typically more informal, more personal writing that allows the learner to connect personal experience with readings, and it also allows writers to interact with peers in writing within the learning context. There is little pressure in terms of correctness or a grade, so typically students feel more comfortable expressing ideas. The sheer amount of writing is a rich and valuable experience for writers, particularly ELLs, and frequently participation in online discussions draws upon life experiences, an opportunity that adult learners bring a great deal to. Using the resource of an online discussion component for a course seems to have excellent possibilities in allowing students another context for thinking,

writing, and interactions and could provide another avenue for students to build rhetorical dexterity.

Authentic Engagement in Disciplinary Communities of Practice

In terms of the development of different written registers and contexts, it is compellingly evident from the findings of the study that the learners who experienced authentic disciplinary writing had the deepest sense of and engagement in a community of practice—a cognitive apprenticeship with legitimate peripheral participation (Curry, 2004). For example, the recommendation in this aspect of the development of rhetorical dexterity is that whenever possible students are exposed to and initiated into the discourse practices of a particular discipline, whether it is laboratory sciences, history, psychology, literature, economics, business, or technologies (Carter, 2008). As noted in Curry (2004), the teaching of contrastive rhetoric can be a very valuable strategy in helping an ELL to have an increased awareness of differences in disciplinary texts. Certainly students should have the opportunity to analyze and understand differences in the nature of the discourse and genres in different disciplines, but even more, they should have the opportunity to write in those genres with content characteristic of authentic writing in the discipline and/or associated professions.

Meaningful and Thoughtful Feedback

The final recommendation to help facilitate an adult ELL's development of academic literacy is that all students receive thoughtful and meaningful feedback on their written academic work. "Thoughtful and meaningful" suggests that the teacher interact with the learner in terms of the expectations, the context, the disciplinary discourse, and the genre. Clearly, this is an extraordinarily difficult expectation of faculty who have to thoughtfully and clearly define the nature of the writing task and then provide individual and instructive feedback to each of

(potentially) 150 students. However, the participants in the study were clear in their articulation of the value of this kind of experience in developing their academic writing confidence and competency. For example, related to her work in basic writing, Jeannette commented, “It was very helpful to have a paper that was very thoroughly commented on. To be honest with you, I liked that a lot. I was always very excited to go to this class and have my paper back in my hand and look at it and be able to see where my mistakes were and what I did well.” Mona echoed that appreciation, saying, “I need a teacher to say, ‘This part was good, but this is what you can do to make it better.’ Give us ideas to make it better.”

Thoughtful, focused, and instructive feedback, while extremely difficult to manage for faculty in a real-world context, is extremely important in shaping a student’s understanding of the discourse expected in the course and, if appropriate, in the context of the discipline. It also will be part of the student’s learning dynamic in being able to recognize and adapt with flexibility to the literacy practices in different academic communities of practice.

Transparency and Explicitness of Expectations

The use of models of written genres in supporting students as they tentatively enter the world of disciplinary writing is a valuable resource, but not a pedagogical strategy that is frequently used. As noted in several studies (Macbeth, 2006; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Casanave, 2002), frequently faculty feel that they are instructing students clearly using phrases and guidelines that are grounded in the “invisible knowledge” in the community, and yet they become frustrated that their instruction seems to have such little impact on student writing (Macbeth, 2006). Such frequent injunctions as “write an introduction,” “faulty grammar,” “express your ideas clearly,” “make a clear link between claim and supporting evidence” are clearly understood by those with mastery or full membership in the academic discourse

community (i.e. English composition teachers), but these guidelines are often not clear at all to novices (Turner & Lillis, 2001, pp. 58-59).

The recommendation that students entering the community of academic writers have models and explicitly defined expectations, strongly supported by the participants' experiences, would be a extremely valuable to enable students on the periphery of the community to be drawn in to understanding of the culture and expectations of the practice.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has provided a number of insights into the experiences of adult ELLs in community college as they take on the challenges of negotiating the development of academic literacy. Because the research is situated at the intersection of several different areas of inquiry, the findings have confirmed or extended many principles drawn from a number of bodies of literature. The findings also inform some aspects of the literature that have had little attention or are only now emerging as questions to consider. Finally, this study suggests a number of recommendations for academic support and pedagogical practice that would support the development of academic literacy in this group of adult learners.

Limitations of the Study

This study, of course, had limitations. First, the quantitative portion of the study had a very, very small sample size (n=30), too small to develop any sense of statistical strength. The sample size was an artifact of the difficulty of finding adult ELLs in large numbers. The research design stipulated that surveys would be administered in sections of college-level disciplinary courses on an urban campus of a community college. Because of the intrusion into a class period, the survey was designed to be very brief and efficient for the participants. Because of this, however, it did not explore a number of topics in depth. Also, this design

typically yielded only one or two adult ELLs per section surveyed, and sometimes none. The community college that was the site of the research would not allow solicitation of student participation through e-mail, and there were few reliable avenues to contact the specific population in a focused recruitment.

Another limitation was that, inherent in the nature of qualitative literature, is the very limited ability to generalize the findings. While the data is thick, rich, and descriptive, it, of necessity, is individualized to those individuals at that college in that city. Clearly, only qualitative research would provide the kinds of insights and understandings that emerged, the lack of generalizability is still a limitation.

A third limitation was that the interview participants were often unable to analyze and articulate the nature of many of the elements of their development of academic writing. For example, several spoke of needing to “write the proper way,” but efforts to pursue the nature of “the proper way” as they conceived of it often led them to shrug their shoulders and just repeat, “You know, the proper way...the right way.” Whether the limitation was in their own ability to recognize and articulate the aspects of that experience, whether it was in the nature of the way that academic writing had been framed for them, or whether it was in the researcher’s limitations in not wanting to unduly shape their responses, the relatively brief and superficial responses were a limitation of sorts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the amount of literature in the many professional journals related to composition studies, composition pedagogy, ESL curriculum and pedagogy, community college populations, and adult education, there is certainly much being done. However, this study worked with a population that has had minimal attention—adult ELLs in community college, particularly those

assessed as capable writers. At every stage of this research, a number of directions and questions for future research suggested themselves. Three seem of particular interest.

The first recommendation for future research is to do quantitative research (a survey) to develop extensive data from one to two hundred adult ELL students with questions that made finer distinctions to illuminate their experience of developing as academic writers. This broad and inclusive a sample with a more nuanced survey could provide helpful data that could be analyzed to develop some statistically significant data.

The second recommendation for future research would be to do a contrastive study of the experiences and attitudes of adult native speakers who are capable writers with adult ELLs who are capable writers. The valuable question here is to what extent do these two populations have similar or different experiences. Typically, once an ELL leaves the ESL curriculum, he or she is in mainstream basic writing (and developmental reading if the placement test recommends that) with a general population of students, including many adults who are native speakers. It would be valuable for pedagogical practice to understand whether the experiences and attitudes of the ELLs are very similar to those of other adult learners and in what respects they diverge in their transitions into academic literacy.

Finally, women are much more prominent in the findings of this research study for several reasons, but it would be valuable and insightful to focus research on the experiences of men. At the campus which was the site of the research, there are more women than men enrolled; 51.6% of the full-time students are women, while 63.4% of the part-time students are women. The group of students recommended by faculty as being capable writers included twice as many women as men, and of the students who were willing to participate, more women were willing to participate than men. Of the 11 participants (7 women and 4 men), the women were

by far more open, communicative, and expressive of their experiences. It is not clear whether this was an artifact of the specific female participants, the gender of the researcher, or a greater comfort for sharing experiences in the women participants. It seems, however, that a focus on the experiences of male adult ELLs and research considering the perspectives and the academic literacy journeys of the adult ELL male population would be of great value.

Conclusions

This research study was situated at the intersection of a number of bodies of literature related to theory and pedagogical practice: situated cognition and Communities of Practice, adult learning, the Academic Literacies Model, New Literacy Studies, composition studies, and the role of ELLs in the community college. It was informed by all of these bodies of literature, and the findings have implications in all of these areas, especially in regard to pedagogical practice in the development of academic literacy for adult ELLs in community college, specifically their development of confidence and competence in academic writing. It is recommended that a number of specific pedagogical approaches, if implemented in practice, can support and facilitate an adult ELL's development of academic literacy. It is also recommended that other avenues of research be undertaken to further explore the dynamics of academic literacy in community college for this specific population of student.

References

- 2011 fact sheet*. (2011). American Association of Community Colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/FactSheet2011.pdf>.
- Adam, M. (2009). Are our college and students ready for higher education? *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, 19(11), 14-15.
- Adner-Kassner, L. & Glau, G. (2005). *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*. 2nd Edition. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Adult ESL language and literacy instruction: A vision and action agenda for the 21st century* (2000). National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE).
- Adult English language learner profiles* (2009). Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/instructional/prac_toolkit.html
- Ahrenhoerster, G. (2006). Will they still respect us in the morning? A study of how students write after they leave the composition classroom. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 34(1), 20-31.
- Alfred, M. (2003). Sociocultural contexts and learning: Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women in U.S. postsecondary education. *Adult Education Quarterly* (4), 242-260.
- Armstrong, S. (2010). Postsecondary literacy: Coherence in theory, terminology, and teacher preparation. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 33(3), 2-4, 6,8, 10-13.
- Aximm, W. & Pearce, L. (2006). *Mixed Method Data Collection Strategies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Badolato, V. (2010). Building community: The future of higher education may depend on the success of community colleges. National Council of State Legislatures. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=19380>
- Barta-Smith, N. & DiMarco, D. (2009). Navigating everyday literacies: Mapping a deep frame in teaching argument. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 37(1), 68-83. .
- Bartholomae, D. (1985). Inventing the university. In M. Rose (Ed.), *When a Writer Can't Write: Studies in Writer's Block and Other Composing Process Problem* (pp. 134-165). New York, Guilford Press.
- Bartholomae, D. (1987). Writing on the margins: The concept of literacy in higher education. In T. Enos (Ed.) *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers* (pp. 66-83). New York: Random House.
- Bartholomae, D. (1993). The tidy house: Basic writing in the American curriculum. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 21(1), 4-21.
- Bartholomae, D. (1995). Writing with teachers: A conversation with Peter Elbow. *College Composition and Communication*, 46(1), 62-71.
- Bartholomae, D. (1999). The study of error. In K. Weese, S. Fox, & S. Greene (Eds). *Teaching Academic Literacy*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (originally published in 1980).
- Bartholomae, D. (2007). Writing with Texts: An Interview with David Bartholomae. *The Minnesota Review*, 95-115.
- Bartholomae, D. (2011). Reconsiderations: "Inventing the university" at 25. *College English*, 73(3), 260-282

- Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanic (Eds.), *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bazerman, C. (1990). The second stage in writing across the curriculum. *College English*, 53(2), 209-212.
- Bazerman, C. (1992). From cultural criticism to disciplinary participation: Living with powerful words. In A. Herrington & C. Moran (Eds.). *Writing, Teaching, and Learning in the Disciplines*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Baynham, J. (2000). Academic writing in new and emergent discipline areas. In M. Lea & B. Stierer (Eds.). *Student writing in Higher Education: New Contexts* (pp. 17-31). Buckingham: SRE & OUP.
- Benesch, S. (1988). *Ending remediation: Linking ESL and content in higher education*. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL.
- Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for Academic Purposes: Theory, Politics, and Practice*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Benesch, S. (2007). What about the students? English language learners in postsecondary settings. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.) *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, (pp. 655-677).
- Bizzell, P. (1982). College composition: Initiation into the academic discourse community. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 12(2), 191-207.

- Bizzell, P. (1986). What happens when basic writers come to college? *College Composition and Communication*, 37(3), 294-301.
- Bizzell, P. (1988). Arguing about literacy. *College English*, 50(2), 141-153.
- Bizzell, P. (2000). Basic writing and the issue of correctness, or what to do with “mixed” forms of academic discourse. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 19(1), 4-12.
- Blaauw-Hara, M. (2006). Why our students need instruction in grammar, and how we should go about it. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 34(2), 165-178.
- Blanton, L. (1998). Discourse, artifacts, and the Ozarks: Understanding academic literacy. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.), *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 219-235). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Blau, S. (2006). College writing, academic literacy, and the intellectual community: California dreams and cultural oppositions. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is “College-Level” Writing?* (pp. 359-377). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Blommaert, J. Street, B., & Turner, J. (2007). Academic literacies—what have we achieved and where to from here? *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 137-148.
- Bloom, L. (1996). Freshman composition as a middle-class enterprise. *College English*, 58(6), 654-675.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Boylan, H. (1999). Developmental education: Demographics, outcomes, and activities. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 23(2), 2-6.
- Boylan, H., Bonham, B., & White, S. (1999). Developmental and remedial education in postsecondary education. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 108, 87-101.

- Boynton, L. (2003). See me: Conference strategies for developmental writers. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 30(4), 391-402.
- Braine, G. (2002). Academic literacy and the nonnative speaker graduate student. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1, 59-68.
- Brammer, C. (2002). Linguistic cultural capital and basic writers. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 21(2), 16-36.
- Brent, D. (2005). Reinventing WAC (again): The first-year seminar and academic literacy. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(2), 253-276.
- Brilliant, J. (2005). Writing as an act of courage: The inner experience of developmental writers. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 29, 505-516.
- Brown, J., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18(1), 32-42.
- Brookfield, S. (2003). Racializing the discourse of adult education. *Harvard Educational Review*, Winter 2003, 497-523.
- Bryman, A. (1988). The debate about quantitative and qualitative research. In A. Bryman & R. Burgess (Eds.) *Qualitative Research, Volume I* (pp. 35-69). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bryman, A. (2006). Expanding the reasons for conducting mixed methods research. In V. Plano-Clark & J. Creswell (Eds.). *The Mixed Methods Reader* (pp. 251-270). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Buehl, D. & Moore, D. (2009). Linking research to practice in disciplinary instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(6), 535-537.

- Buttaro, L. (2002). Understanding adult ESL learners: Multiple dimensions of learning and adjustments among Hispanic women. *Adult Basic Education, 11*(1), 40-61.
- Burnham, C. (2001). Expressive pedagogy: Practice/theory, theory/practice, In G. Tate, A. Rupiper, & K. Schick (Eds.) *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. New York: Oxford.
- Byrd, K. & Macdonald, G. (2005). Defining college readiness from the inside out: First-generation college student perspectives. *Community College Review, 33*(1), 17-39.
- Canagarajah, A. (1997). Safe houses in the contact zone: Coping strategies of African-American students in the academy. *College Composition and Communication, 48*(2), 173-196
- Carroll, J. & Dunkelblau, H. (2011). Preparing ESL students for “real” college writing: A glimpse of common writing tasks ESL students encounter at one community college. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College, 38*(3), 271-281.
- Carroll, L. A. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Carter, M. (2007). Ways of knowing, doing, and writing in the disciplines. *College Composition and Communication, 58*(3), 385-418.
- Carter, S. (2008). *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and Basic Writing Instruction*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Casanave, C. P. (2002). *Writing Games: Multicultural Case Studies of Academic Literacy Practices in Higher Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Cheng, A. (2008). Individualized engagement with genre in academic literacy tasks. *English for Specific Purposes, 27*(4), 387-411.

- Chao, E., DeRocco, E., & Flynn, M. (2008). *Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers
- Chiseri-Strater, E. (1991). *Academic literacies: The public and private discourse of university students*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Chen, A. (2008). Individualized engagement with genre in academic literacy tasks. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(4), 387-411.
- Christie, H., Tett, L., Cree, V., Hounsell, J., & McCune, V. (2008). 'A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions': Learning to be a university student. *Studies in Higher Education* 33(5), 567-581.
- Chung, C. (2005). Theory, practice, and the future of developmental education. *Journal of Developmental Education* 28(3), 2-10.
- Clark, B. (1960). The 'cooling out' function in higher education. *American Journal of Sociology*, 65, 569-76.
- Coffin, C., Curry, M.J., Goodman, S., Hewings, A. Lillis, T., & Swann, J. (2003). *Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education*. London: Routledge.
- Connell, C. (2008). *The Vital Role of Community Colleges in the Education and Integration of Immigrants: A Primer on Community Colleges and the Education of Newcomers*. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.
- Connors, R. (1997). *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Conway, K. (2010). Educational aspirations in an urban community college: Differences between immigrant and native student groups. *Community College Review*, 37(3), 209-242.

- Cope, N. (2005). Apprenticeship reinvented: Cognition, discourse and implications for academic literacy. *Prospect*, 20(3), 42-62.
- Crandall, J. & Sheppard, K. ((2004). Adult ESL and the community college. Working Paper 7, CAAL Community College Series. Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy. Retrieved from: <http://www.caalusa.org/eslreport.pdf>
- Creswell, J. Plano-Clark, V., Gutmann, J., & Hanson, W. (2003). An expanded typology for classifying mixed methods research into designs. In V. Plano-Clark & J. Creswell (Eds.), *The Mixed Methods Reader* (pp. 161-196). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crews, D. & Aragon, S. (2004). Influence of a community developmental education writing course on academic performance. *Community College Review*, 32(2), 1-18.
- Crowson, R. (1994). Qualitative research methods in higher education. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 167-208). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cruz, M. (2004). Can English language learners acquire academic English? *English Journal*, 93(4), 14-17.
- Curry, M.J. (2001). Preparing to be privatized: The hidden curriculum of a community college ESL writing class. In E. Margolis (Ed.), *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education* (pp.177 -191). London: Routledge.
- Curry, M.J. (2003). Skills, access, and “basic writing”: A community college case study from the United States. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 35(1), 5-18.

- Curry, M.J (2004). UCLA community college review: Academic literacy for English language learners. *Community College Review* 32 (2), 51-69.
- Curry, M.J. & Hewings, A. (2003). Approaches to teaching writing. In C.Coffin; M.J. Curry; S. Goodman; A. Hewings; T. Lillis, & J. Swann (Eds.). *Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education* (pp. 19-44)
- Curry, M.J. & Lillis, T. (2004). Multilingual scholars and the imperative to publish in English: Negotiating interests, demands, and rewards. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38,4: 663-688
- Curry, M.J., Magyar, A., & Carr, J. (2003). Using telephone teaching to 'scaffold' students into academic literacy in the Open University's Openings Programme. Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults Conference. Bangor, Wales, UK. Retrieved from <http://ww.cc.rochester.edu/warner/faculty/curry/pdf/scutrea.pdf>.
- Curtis, M. & Herrington, A. (2003). Writing development in the college years: by whose definition? *College Composition and Communication*, 55(1), 69-90.
- Darabi, R. (2006). Basic writers and learning communities. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 25(1), 53-72.
- Dean, D. (2008). *Genre Theory: Teaching, Writing, and Being*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Delpit, L. (1998). The politics of teaching literate discourse. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 207-218). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published 1993).

- Di Gennaro, K. (2008). Assessment of generation 1.5 learners for placement into college writing courses. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 27(1), 61-79.
- Ding, H. (2008). The use of cognitive and social apprenticeship to teach a disciplinary genre: Initiation of graduate students into NIH grant writing. *Written Communication*, 25(1), 3-52.
- Durst, R. (2006). Writing at the postsecondary level. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.), *Research on Composition: Multiple Perspectives on Two Decades of Change* (78-107). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Elbow, P. (1995). Being a writer vs. being an academic: A conflict in goals. *College Composition and Communication* 46,(1), 72-83.
- Elbow, P. (1998). Reflections on academic discourse: How it relates to freshmen and colleagues. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 145-169). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published in 1991).
- Engstrom, C. & Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not opportunity. *Change*, 40(1), 46-51.
- Estrada, L. Dupous, E. & Wolman, C. (2005). The personal-emotional-social adjustment of English language learners to a community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 29, 557-568.
- Ewing, G. (2003). The new literacy studies: A point of contact between literacy research and literacy work. *Literacies*, 1, 15-21.

- Fallon, D., Lahar, C. J., & Susman, D. (2009). Taking the high road to transfer: Building bridges between English and psychology. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 37 (1), 41-55.
- Ferenz, O. (2005). EFL writers' social networks: Impact on advanced academic literacy development. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 4, 339-351.
- Fike, D. & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community college. *Community College Review*, 33(2), 68-88.
- Fish, S. (2008). *Save the World on Your Own Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fish, S. (2009). What should colleges teach? *New York Times.com*. Retrieved from:
<http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/24/what-should-colleges-teach/>
- Fishman, S. & McCarthy, L. (2001). An ESL writers and her discipline-based professor: Making progress even when goals don't match. *Written Communication*, 18(2), 180-228.
- Flower, L. & Hayes, J. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365-387.
- Flowerdew, J. (2000). Discourse community, legitimate peripheral participation, and the nonnative-English speaking scholar. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(1), 127-150.
- Franco, R. (2002). The civic role of community colleges: Preparing students for the work of democracy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 6, 119-38.
- Fulkerson, R. (2005). Summary and critique: Composition at the turn of the twenty-first century. *College Composition and Communication* 56 (4), 654-687.
- Fulwiler, T. (1984). How well does writing across the curriculum work? *College English* 46(1), 113-125.
- Gee, J.P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. New York: Falmer.

- Gee, J.P. (1998). What is literacy? In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 51-59). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published 1987).
- Gee, J.P. (2000). The new literacy studies: From 'socially situated' to the work of the social. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanic (Eds.). *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*. London: Routledge.
- "Glossary" (2005). *Developing ELL Programs*. U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/glossary.html>.
- Green, A. (2003). Difficult stories: Service learning, race, class, and whiteness. *College Composition and Communication*, 55(2), 276-301.
- Griffin, J., Falberg, A., & Krygier, G. (2010). Bridging the gap between college and high school teachers of writing in an online assessment community. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 37(3), 295-304.
- Glenn, C., Goldthwaite, M, & Connors, R. (2003). *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. Fifth Edition. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Grimes, S. & David, K. (1999). Underprepared community college students: Implications of attitudinal and experiential differences. *Community College Review*, 27(2), 73-92.
- Guess, A. (2008). A 'penalty' for starting at a community college? *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: <http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2008/10/01/pathway>.
- Hammersley, J. (1992). Deconstructing the qualitative-quantitative divide. In A. Bryman & R. Burgess (Eds.). *Qualitative Research, Volume I* (pp. 70-83). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Hansman, C. & Wilson, A. (1998). Teaching writing in community colleges: A situated view of how adult learn to write in computer-based writing classrooms. *Community college Review*, 26(1), 21-42.
- Hassell, H. & Giordano, J.B. (2009). Transfer institutions, transfer of knowledge: The development of rhetorical adaptability and underprepared writers. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 37 (1), 24-39.
- Hawisher, G. & Selfe, C. (1999). *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*. Logan: Utah State University Press and NCTE.
- Hazel, C., Tett, L., Cree, V., Hounsell, J. & McCune, V. (2008). ‘A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions’: Learning to be a university student. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(5), 567-581.
- Henderson, R. & Hirst, E. (2007). Reframing academic literacy: Re-examining a short-course for “disadvantaged” tertiary students. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6(2), 25-38.
- Hickey, D. (2001). Response to opening statements. *Connecting WAC and ESL*. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/aw.forums/fall2001/hickey_response.htm.
- Higbee, J., Arendale, D., & Lundell D. (2005). Using theory and research to improve access and retention in developmental education. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 129, 5-15.
- Hill, H. (1990). Discourse in adult education: The language education of adult immigrants in Sweden. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 9(4), 289-315.
- Hill, R. (1995). Gay discourse in adult education: A critical review. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 45(3), 142-158.

- Hirsch, L. (1988). Language across the curriculum: A model for ESL students in content courses. In S. Benesch (Ed.), *Ending remediation: Linking ESL and Content in Higher Education* (pp. 67-89). Alexandria, Virginia, TESOL.
- Hirst, E., Henderson, R., Allan, M., Bode, J. & Kocatepe, M. (2004). Repositioning academic literacy: Charting the emergence of a community of practice. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 27(1), 66-80.
- Hirvela, A. ((2010). [Review of the book *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and Complexities of Academic Literacy Developmen*]. *English for Specific Purposes* 29, 68-75.
- Hodgkinson, C., Slay, H., & Sieborger, I. (2008). Developing communities of practice within and outside higher education institutions. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(3), 433-442.
- Horner, B., Lu, M., Royster, J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). A translingual approach to language difference in writing. *College English* 73(3), 303-321.
- Hubenthal, W. (2004). Older Russian immigrants' experiences in learning English: Motivation, methods, and barriers. *Adult Basic Education*, 14(2), 104-126.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Illich, P., Hagan, C., & McCallister, L. (2004). Performance in college-level courses among students concurrently enrolled in remedial courses: Policy implications. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 435-453.

- Immigrant Generation: Second Generation Immigrant (2011). *Museum of Learning*. Retrieved from http://www.museumstuff.com/learn/topics/immigrant_generations::sub::Second_Generation_Immigrant
- Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ivankova, N., Creswell, J., & Stick, S. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, 18(3), 3-20.
- Jacobs, C. (2005). On being an insider on the outside: New spaces for integrating academic literacies. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10(4), 475-487.
- Jacobs, C. (2007). Towards a critical understanding of the teaching of discipline-specific academic literacies: Making the tacit explicit. *Journal of Education*, 41, 59-81.
- Jawitz, J. (2007). New academics negotiating communities of practice: Learning to swim with the big fish. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(2), 185-197.
- James, P., Bruch, P., & Jehangir, R. (2006). Ideas in practice: Building bridges in a multicultural learning community. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 29 (3), 10-15, 18.
- Johnson, C. (2001). A survey of current research on online communities of practice. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 4(1), 45-60.
- Johnson & Turner (2003). Data collection strategies in mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (pp. 297-319). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, R. B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher* 33 (7), 14-26.

- Jones, C., Turner, J., & Street, B. (1999). Introduction. In C. Jones, J. Turner, & B. Street (Eds.) *Students Writing in the University: Cultural and epistemological Issues*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Kasworm, C. (2005). Adult student identity in an intergenerational community college classroom. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 56(1), 3-20.
- Kasworm, C. E., Sandmann, L. R., & Sissel, P. A. (2000). Adult learners in higher education. In A. L. Wilson & E. R. Hays, (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education*, (pp. 449-463). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kaspar, L. (2000). New technologies, new literacies: Focused discipline research and ELS learning communities. *Language Learning and Technology*, 4(2), 105-128.
- Killacky, J., Thomas, C., & Accomando, A. (2002). Learning communities and community colleges: A case study. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 26, 763-775.
- Kim, J. (2005). A community within the classroom: Dialogue journal writing of adult ESL learners. *Adult Basic Education*, 15(1), 21-32.
- Kirsch, G. (1992). Methodological pluralism: epistemological issues. In G. Kirsch & P. Sullivan (Eds.). *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research* (pp. 247-269). Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Kolajo, E. (2004). From developmental education to graduation: A community college experience. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 365-371
- Kozeracki, C. (2002). ERIC review: Issues in developmental education. *Community College Review*, 29(4), 83-101.

- Krueger, J. & Dunning, D. (1999). Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77 (6), 1121-1134.
- Kurtyka, F. (2010). "The expression of wise others": Using students' views of academic discourse to talk about social justice. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 38(1), 47-60.
- Kutz, E. (1998). Between students' language and academic discourse: Interlanguage as middle ground. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 75-93). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published 1986).
- Kutz, E. (2004). From outsider to insider: Studying academic discourse communities across the curriculum. In R. Spack & V. Zamel (Eds.) *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates.
- Lauer J. & Asher, J. (1988). *Composition Research: Empirical Designs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lea, M. (1998). Academic literacies and learning in higher education: Constructing knowledge through texts and experience. *Studies in the Education of Adults* 30 (2), 156-172.
- Lea, M. (2004). Academic literacies: A pedagogy for course design. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(6), 739-754.

- Lea, M. & Stierer, B. (2000). Editors' Introduction. *Student Writing in Higher Education: New Contexts*. Philadelphia: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press. 1-14.
- Lea, M. & Street, B. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157-172.
- Lea, M. & Street, B. (2000). Student writing and staff feedback in higher education: An academic literacies approach. In M. Lea & B. Stierer (Eds). *Student Writing in Higher Education: New Contexts*. Philadelphia: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press. 32-46.
- Lea, M. & Street, B. (2006). The "Academic literacies" model: Theory and applications. *Theory Into Practice*, 45(4), 368-377.
- Leki, I. (1998). *Academic Writing: Exploring Processes and Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leki, I. & Carson, J. (1994). Students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 81-101.
- Leki, I., Cumming, A., and Silva, T. (2006). Second-language composition and teaching and learning. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.). *Research on Composition: Multiple Perspectives on Two Decades of Change* (141-169). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lillis, T. (2003). Student writing as "academic literacies": Drawing on Bakhtin to move from critique to design. *Language and Education*, 17(3), 192-207.
- Lillis, T. and Curry, M. J. (2006) Professional academic writing by multilingual scholars: interactions with literacy brokers in the production of English medium texts, *Written Communication*, 23, 1:3-35.

- Lillis, T. & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 5-32.
- Lillis, T. & Swann, J. (2003). Giving feedback on student writing. In C. Coffin, M.J. Curry, S. Goodman, A. Hewings, T. Lillis, & J. Swann (Eds.) *Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education*. (pp. 101-129). London: Routledge.
- Lillis, T. & Turner, J. (2001). Student writing in higher education: Contemporary confusion, traditional concerns. *Teaching in Higher Education* 6 (1), 57-68.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 30.
- Luke, A. (1997). Theory and practice in critical discourse analysis. Retrieved from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/ed270/Luke/SAHA6.html>
- Lunsford, A. (1979). Cognitive development and the basic writer. *College English*, 41(3), 38-46.
- Lunsford, A. & Lunsford, K. (2008). "Mistakes are a fact of life": A national comparative study. *College Composition and Communication*, 59(4), 781-806.
- Lunsford, R. (2006). From attitude to aptitude: Assuming the stance of a college writer. . In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is "College-Level" Writing?* (pp. 179-198). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Macbeth, K. (2006). Diverse, unforeseen, and quaint difficulties: The sensible responses of novices learning to follow instruction in academic writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 41(2), 180-207.
- Macrorie, K. (1970). *Telling Writing*. Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden.
- Malnarich, G. (2005). Learning communities and curricular reform: "Academic apprenticeships" for developmental students. *New Directions for Community Colleges* 129, 51-62.

- Mathews-Aydinli, J. (2006). *Supporting adult English language learners' transitions to postsecondary education*. CAELA Brief. Washington D.C.: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA).
- Mathews-Aydinli, J. (2008). Overlooked and understudied? A survey of current trends in research on adult English languages learners. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 58(3), 198-213.
- McAlexander, P. (2000). Developmental classroom personality and response to peer review. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 17(1), 5-12.
- McClenney, K. (2009, April 24). Helping community college students succeed: A moral imperative. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p.A60.
- McDowell, L. (2004). The territory of academic literacy. Making a Difference : Educational Development to Enhance Academic Literacy. MEDAL Working Paper No. 1. University of York. Retrieved from <http://medal.unn.ac.uk/docs/MEDAL%20Working%20Paper%20No%201.pdf>
- McCarthy, L. (1987). A stranger in strange lands: A college student writing across the curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 21, 233-265.
- McHugh, J., Gelatt, J., & Fix, M. (2007). *Adult English Language Instruction in the United States: Determining Need and Investing Wisely*. National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. Migration Policy Institute.
- McLeod, S. & Maimon, E. (2000). Clearing the air: WAC myths and realities. *College English*, 62(5), 573-583.
- Meagher, D.G. (1993). *Perceptions on Literacy in a Community College: Interviews with Students and Faculty in English and College Prep Departments*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida.

- Merriam, S. & Simpson, E. (2000). *A Guide to Research for Educators and Trainers of Adults*. Malabar, Florida: Krieger publishing Company.
- Merriam, S., Caffarella, R., & Baumgartner, L. (2007). *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S., Courtenay, B., & Baumgartner, L. (2003). On becoming a witch: Learning in a marginalized community of practice. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(3), 170-188.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (3-33). San Francisco: The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.
- Michaud, M. (2011). The ‘reverse commute’: Adult students and the transition from profession to academic literacy. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 38(3), 244-257.
- Mlynarczyk, R. (1998). *Conversations of the Mind: The Uses of Journal Writing for Second-Language Learners*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Mlynarczyk, R. (2006). Personal and academic writing: Revisiting the debate. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 25(1), 4-25.
- Mlynarczyk, R. & Babbitt, M. (2002). The power of academic learning communities. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 27(1), 71-86.
- Mutnik, D. (2011). Basic writing and the future of higher education. *College English*, 73(3), 322-336.
- Nealy, M. (2008). New study looks at retention in community colleges. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://diverseeducation.com/article/10891>.

- Niewolny, K. L., & Wilson, A.L. (2009). What happened to the promise?: A critical (re)orientation of two sociocultural learning traditions. *Adult Education Quarterly* 60(4), 26-45.
- O'Donnell, V. L., & Tobbell, J. (2007). The transition of adult students to Higher Education: Legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57(4), 312-328.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Johnson, R.B. (2006). The validity issue in mixed research. In V. Plano-Clark & J. Creswell (Eds.), *The Mixed Methods Reader* (pp. 271-298). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Leech, N.L. (2004). Enhancing the interpretation of “significant” findings: The role of mixed methods research. *The Qualitative Report*, 9(4), 770-792. Retrieved 24 July 2009 from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR9-4/onwuegbuzie.pdf>.
- Paisley, P. & Reeves, P. (2001). Qualitative research in counseling. In D. Locke, J. Myers, & E. Herr (Eds.), *The Handbook of Counseling* (pp. 481-498). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Patthey-Chavez, G., Dillon, P., & Thomas-Spiegel, J. (2005) How far do they get? Tracking students with different academic literacies through community college remediation. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 32(3), 261-277.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing.
- Pekins, J. (2006). A community college professor reflects on first-year composition. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is “College-Level” Writing?* (pp. 231-252). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Perin, D. (2006). Can community college protect both access and standards: the problem of remediation? *Teachers College Record*, 108(3), 339-373.
- Phillippe, K. & Gonzalez-Sullivan, L. (2005). *National Profile of Community Colleges: Trends & Statistics*. 4th edition. Washington D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Prendergast, C. (1998). Race: The absent present in composition studies. *College Composition and Communication*, 50, 36-53.
- Powell, P. (2009). Retention and writing instruction. *College Composition and Communication*, 60(4), 664-681.
- Raftery, S. (2005). Developmental learning communities at Metropolitan Community College. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 129, 63-72.
- Raimes, A. (1985). What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 229-258
- Rance-Roney, J. (1995). Transitioning Adult ESL learners to academic programs. Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA). Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org/caela/printer.php?printRefURL=http%3A//www.cal.org/caela/esl>
- Remedial course offerings (2003). *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting PostSecondary Institutions in Fall 2000: Statistical Analysis Report*. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/peqis/publications/2004010/index.asp?sec>
- Reynolds, N., Bizzell, P., & Herzberg, B. (2004). *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing*. Boston MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

- Ricketts, G. (2009). Community colleges: A brief history. *EducationNews.org*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ednews.org/articles/community-colleges-a-brief-history.html>
- Rose, M. (1988). Narrowing the mind and page: Remedial writers and cognitive reductionism. *College Composition and Communication*, 39(3), 267-302.
- Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. New York: Free Press.
- Rose, M. (1998). The language of exclusion: Writing instruction at the university. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.), *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 9-30). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (originally published in 1985).
- Roueche, J. & Roueche, S. (1999). *High stakes, high performance: Making remedial education work*. Washington, D.C. Community College Press.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Russell, D. (1992). American origins of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement. In A. Herrington & C. Moran (Eds.), *Writing, Teaching, and Learning in the Disciplines*, (pp. 22-44). New York: the Modern Language Association of America.
- Russell, D. (2006). Historical studies of composition. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.), *Research on Composition: Multiple Perspectives on Two Decades of Change* (243-276). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Russell, D., Lea, M., Parker, J., Street, B., & Donahue, T. (2009). Exploring notions of genre in “academic literacies” and “writing across the curriculum”: Approaches across countries and contexts. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & Figueiredo, D. (Eds.), *Genre in a Changing*

- World: Perspective on Writing* (pp. 395-423). Colorado: WAC Clearinghouse, Parlor Press.
- Schuetz, P. (2005). UCLA community college review: Campus environment: A missing link in studies of community college attrition. *Community College Review*, 32(4), 60-82.
- Shaughnessy, M. (1977). *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shor, I. (2005). Why teach about social class? *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 33(2), 161-184.
- Skilton-Sylvester, E. (2002). Should I stay or should I go? Investigating Cambodian women's participation and investment in adult ESL programs. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(1), 8-26.
- Smith, R. (2010). Feeling supported: Curricular learning communities for basic skills courses and students who speak English as a second language. *Community College Review*, 37(3), 261-284.
- Smoke, T. (2004). Lessons from Ming: Helping students use writing to learn. In R. Spack & V. Zamel (Eds.) *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms* (pp. 61-73). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Snow, M. (2005). A model of academic literacy for integrated language and content instruction. In E. Hinkel (Ed.) *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (693-712). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Solomon, Y. (2007). Not belonging: What makes a functional learner identity in the undergraduate mathematics community of practice? *Studies in Higher Education*, 32(1), 79-96.

Sommers, N. (1980). Revision strategies of student writers and experienced adult writers.

College composition and communication, 31, 378-388.

Sommers, N., & Saltz, L. (2004). The novice as expert: Writing the freshman year. *College*

Composition and Communications, 56(4) 124-149.

Southard, A. & Clay, J. (2004). Measuring the effectiveness of developmental writing courses.

Community College Review, 32(2), 39-51.

Spack, R. (1997). The acquisition of academic literacy in a second language: A longitudinal case study. *Written Communication*, 14(1), 3-62.

Spack, R. (1998). Initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community: How far should we go? In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 85-104). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Spellman, N. (2007). Enrollment and retention barriers adult students encounter. *Community*

College Enterprise. FindArticles.com. 22 March 2010. Retrieved from

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6937/is_1_13/ai_n28456958/

Stacey, J. (2009). Writer identity while learning discipline-specific academic literacy in an additional language. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 27(3), 345-356.

Stanley, J. (2010). *The Rhetoric of Remediation: Negotiating Entitlement and Access to Higher Education*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Stephens, D. (2001). Increasing access: Education underprepared students in U.S. colleges and universities, past, present, and future. East Tennessee State University. Retrieved from <http://faculty.etsu.edu/stephen/misc/increasingaccess.htm>.

- Sternglass, M. (2000). *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.
- Sternglass, M. (2004). "It became easier over time": A case study of the relationship between writing, learning, and the creation of knowledge. In R. Spack & V. Zamel (Eds.) *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms* (pp. 47-59). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates.
- Straub, R. (1996). The concept of control in teacher response: Defining the varieties of 'directive' and 'facilitative' commentary. *College Composition and Communication*, 47(2), 223-251.
- Street, B. (1995). *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy Development, Ethnography and Education*. London: Longman.
- Street, B. (1997). The implications of the "New Literacy Studies" for literacy education. *English in Education*, 31(3), 45-59.
- Street, B. (1999). Academic literacies. In C. Jones, J. Turner, & B. Street (Eds.). *Students Writing in the University: Cultural and Epistemological Issues* (193-228). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 193-199
- Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77-91.
- Street, B. (2004). Academic literacies and the "new orders": Implications for research and practice in student writing in higher education. *LATISS: Learning and Teaching in the Social Sciences*, 1(1), 9-20.
- Street, B. (2005). At last: Recent applications of New Literacy Studies in educational contexts. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 39(4), 417-423.

- Street, B. (2009). 'Hidden' features of academic paper writing. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, Spring 2009. University of Pennsylvania.
- Sullivan, P. (2006). An essential question: What is "college-level" writing? In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is "College-Level Writing"?* (pp. 1-30). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Sullivan, P. (2008). Measuring "success" at open admissions institutions. *College English*, 70(6), 618-632
- Summers, M. (2003). ERIC review: Attrition research at community colleges. *Community College Review*, 30(4), 64-84.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. (1994). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Szelenyi, K. & Chang, J. (2002). ERIC Review: Educating immigrants: The community college role. *Community College Review*, 30(2), 55-73.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 26. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (2003). *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tate, G., Rupiper, A., & Schick, K. (2001). *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Teddle, C. & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 77-100.
- Thaiss, C. & Porter, T. (2010). "How alive and well is WAC in 2010?" *College Composition and Communication, 61*(3), 534-570.
- Tight, M. (2008). Higher education research as tribe, territory and/or community: a co-citation analysis. *Higher Education, 55*(5), 593-605.
- Tinberg, H. (2001). Are we good enough? Critical literacy and the working class. *College English 63*, 353-360.
- Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 68*(6), 599-624.
- Tinto, V. (1998). Learning communities and the reconstruction of remedial education in higher education. Presentation at the Conference on Replacing Remediation in Higher Education. Stanford University, January 26-27, 1998. Retrieved from <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/SASS/Tnto%20Articles/Learning%20Communities%30&%20Remedial%20Education.pdf>.
- Tisdell, E. (1998). Poststructural feminist pedagogies: The possibilities and limitations of a feminist emancipatory adult learning theory and practice. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(3), 138-156.
- Turner, J. (1999). Academic literacy and the discourse of transparency. In C. Jones, J. Turner, & B. Street (Eds.) *Students Writing in the University: Cultural and Epistemological Issues*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 149-160
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today: a User-Friendly Guide*. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities. Vol. 2070. New York: Routledge.

- Walvoord, B. & McCarthy, L. (1990). *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Students in Four Disciplines*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Wardell, E. (2009). "Mutt genres" and the goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the university? *College Composition and Communication* 60 (4), 765-787.
- Welch, K. (2004). Social issues in first-year college writing. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 8(1), 100-104.
- Welch, N. (2011). "We're here, and we're not going anywhere": Why working-class rhetorical traditions *still* matter. *College English*, 73(3), 221-242.
- Wenger, E. (1998a). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems Thinker*, 9(5). Retrieved from <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml>.
- Wenger, E. (1998b). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. (2007). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. *EWenger.com*. Retrieved from : http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro.htm
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snider, W. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- West, D. (2010). Community colleges: America's forgotten institutions of higher education. *The Huffington Post*. 1 February 2010. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0201_colleges_west.aspx
- Whisnant, C. (2009) Foucault & Discourse. Wofford College. Retrieved February 18, 2010, from http://webs.wofford.edu/whisnantcj/his389/foucault_discourse.pdf.
- Wilcox, K. & delMas, R. (1997). The 'package course' experience and developmental education. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 20(3), 18-24.

- Williams, J. (2007). Writing with texts: An interview with David Bartholomae. *Minnesota Review*, 69, 95-113.
- Williams, M. & Garcia, G. (2005). Crossing academic cultures: A rubric for students and teachers. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 24(1), 93-119.
- Wingate, U. & Dreiss, C. (2009). Developing students' academic literacy: an online approach. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 3(1), A14-A25.
- Wolvoord, B. & McCarthy, L. (1990). *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Students in Four Disciplines*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Writing across the curriculum: An introduction. (2010). *The OWL at Purdue*. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/671/1>
- Zamel V. & Spack, R. (2006). Teaching multilingual learners across the curriculum: Beyond the ESOL classroom and back again. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 25(2), 126-152.
- Zamel, V. (1998). Questioning academic discourse. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures* (pp. 187-197). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published in 1993).
- Zamel, V. (2000). Engaging students in writing-to-learn: Promoting language and literacy across the curriculum. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 19(2), 3-21.
- Zamel, V. (2004). Strangers in academia: The experiences of faculty and ESL students across the curriculum. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.). *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms*. (pp. 3-18). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Originally published in 1995).

Zarkesh, M. (2004). UCLA community college bibliography: The role of developmental education in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 549-553.

9. Please indicate the extent to which the following statements reflect your attitudes about your writing experiences in your college classes.

- I can understand what the professor wants me to do in my writing assignments.
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never
- I am confident that I can do well in the writing assignments in my classes.
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never
- I am confident that I can gather, use, and document information when I need to in my classes.
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never
- I am confident that I can communicate my understanding of what I have learned in writing situations (e.g. papers, essay exams, journals)
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never
- I am confident in my ability to focus, organize, and develop ideas as needed for my college writing assignments.
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never
- I am confident about my use of Standard English in college writing situations (e.g. grammar, punctuation, word choice, and spelling).
 all the time usually sometimes seldom/never

10. For any of following statements, check as many as apply to you regarding how you have developed as a college writer.

- _____ When I first came to college and had writing assignments, I sometimes didn't think I would fit in and be able to complete them the right way.
- _____ I often have writing situations or assignments that are confusing and discouraging.
- _____ I have learned how to plan and approach most writing assignments fairly well.
- _____ I've learned how to write essay exams pretty successfully.

11. Please check any of the following experiences that have helped you to develop as a college writer. Please indicate with "1" the experience that was most helpful to you. Please fill in the blank below labeled "other" if you have had helpful writing experiences that weren't addressed in other items.

- _____ High school English class
- _____ College English reading or composition class(es).
- _____ Working with a writing tutor in the college learning center
- _____ Working with someone else outside of class or outside of the writing center.
- _____ Working with other students during class (sharing ideas, peer review, etc.)
- _____ Instruction and guidance in college classes other than English classes
- _____ Simply doing a lot of reading.
- _____ Simply doing a lot of writing in various college classes.
- _____ Other experiences? _____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY!

VITA
DIANE S. THOMPSON

EDUCATION

D.Ed., Adult Education, The Pennsylvania State University-Harrisburg, 2011
Dissertation (Chair: Edward W. Taylor): No More a Stranger: The Development of Academic Literacy in Adult English Language Learners in Community College

M.A., American Literature/British Literature, Brigham Young University, 1973

B.A., Spanish and English (double major), Brigham Young University, 1971

AWARDS

National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Award for Excellence in Teaching, 2003

Harrisburg Area Community College representative to the National Institute for Leadership Development, 2008

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Dean of Academic Affairs (Social Sciences), Harrisburg Area Community College, 2009-present

Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (Communications, Arts, and Social Sciences), Harrisburg Area Community College, 2007-2009

Coordinator of Writing Program/Chair of English Department, Harrisburg Area Community College, 2004-2007

Tenured Faculty Member, (current rank: Associate Professor of English), English Department, Harrisburg Area Community College, 1998-2007

Adjunct Faculty Member, English, Harrisburg Area Community College, 1992-1998