**Moving High School Juniors Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay
Through Teacher-Modeling**

by

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to assess the differences in high school juniors' overall essay writing scores when given a method of instruction (coping model, mastery model, and neither). After reading two articles that discussed opposing views on the same topic, participants in each group wrote an essay in response to a prompt stemming from the articles. Participants did the same for two subsequent essays as well as a post-test. Participants in the coping model group received explicit instruction on brainstorming, outlining, and essay writing as the teacher demonstrated think-alouds and wrote her thoughts on an overhead projector. Participants in the mastery model group received mastery examples of brainstorms, outlines, and essays. Participants in the control group received neither the coping nor the mastery model. However, their questions were answered without any examples being given. The post-test scores were analyzed using a one-way ANCOVA, which resulted in no statistical significance.

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"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Without Jesus, I am nothing. I owe everything to Him.

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List of Abbreviations

ACT   formerly American College Testing, now ACT

ADAW   Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing

ANCOVA   Analysis of Co-Variance

AP   Advanced Placement

EECAP   Early English Composition Assessment Program

FPT   Five-Paragraph Theme

IQ   Intelligence Quotient

NAEP   National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCLB   No Child Left Behind

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"How long does this essay have to be?" one student asks.
"As long as a piece of string," the teacher responds.
"Oh, so like five paragraphs?"

All too often, teachers of writing and their students have similar conversations to the one above. Many students have been conditioned to produce an essay with five paragraphs, a three-part thesis, and a conclusion that begins with "In conclusion…." And those are the students who at least know a little about writing an essay. These are also the students likely to earn a passing score on standardized writing assessments.

I love to write. Growing up, I would write on any- and everything from my Buffy and Mack books to credit card applications (my parents had to be careful to destroy all junk mail). After my fourth grade teacher passed away in December of that year, we had a substitute named Mrs. Jackson. I do not remember learning much, but I do remember her mandating that we write (on several occasions) "I will not talk in class" 500 times. To any normal student, this was a painstaking, torturous bore. To me, it was an opportunity to write. I did not mind writing sentences one bit. I liked it.

Through the years, I became a good writer. I knew I could write because my teachers always told me so. As a freshman in college, my English professor would write on my papers that I had good ideas and that I knew how to express them. Once, when I wrote a character analysis of Travis in *A Raisin in the Sun*, another professor said I had a unique topic and that I had done a fine job of expressing that topic. With this and other similar encouragements from teachers, family, and friends, I knew I was a good writer. I still am.

But just as my teachers and professors helped to build my confidence as a writer, the students who have expressed their "I can't write" attitudes toward writing may have had adverse experiences. Perhaps the teacher, as was the high school experience of an intern of mine, yelled "This is wrong!" and threw the crumpled up paper into the trash can. Perhaps the teacher, as one of my twelfth-graders once noted, simply wrote "This is good" on each paper. Or, perhaps the teacher, like my aunt, wrote at the top of the paper in heavy red ink "What is your problem?!" Who would expect these students to ever think they *could* or would even *want* to write?

What is apparent in each of these situations is that none of them mention the teacher taking time to *show* the student what the written product should look like or how to arrive at the desired outcome. Having taught high school English for the past ten years, I have come across many different students who have all impacted the manner in which I teach – however great or small. Some students can work independently without much help from the teacher while others need explicit, step-by-step instruction. Partially because I love writing and partially because I want to help my students become better writers, I have always written with my students. I do writing assignments as they do them, and I always share what I have written. As Kaufman (2009) reports, a dearth of research exists on teachers who write with their students. Yet, I am sure I am not the only teacher who writes with her students. It is these writing times that I am afforded the opportunity to learn from my students just as they learn from me. What they teach me often becomes part of my practice as well as my philosophy. During my first year of teaching, two girls got into a physical altercation in my classroom. There was no argument or warning that this fight was about to take place. However, there was much history between the two. Had I paid more attention to their history as it had been told to me previously, I would have known to pay closer attention. These two ladies – unbeknownst to them – changed the way in which I handle

student problems. I now listen to both what is said as well as what is not said. I am now keenly aware of body language, and it has become my personal philosophy to "learn" my students.

Students say many things to their teachers and their peers in an attempt to prove a point. My struggle is getting them to write with that same fervor in which they speak their arguments. They all have opinions, and one of the first lessons students learn in my class is that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion, each of which will be respected regardless of our like or dislike of it. Over the past ten years, I have taught ninth- and eleventh grade English as well as remediation courses in grammar and reading. I have taught both Honors and grade level courses. From these experiences, my students have taught me that all students generally fall into two categories: they want to be in school or they do not; they do their work or they do not; they have a good home life or they do not. However, they all – for the most part – want to graduate and do something with their lives.

Statement of the Problem

One key factor in accomplishing students' do-something-with-their-lives goals is learning how to write. Writing is an action as important as learning to talk, and in today's rapidly changing world, writing is becoming increasingly important. Today, people are inundated with writing of several types: magazine articles, newspapers, online blogs, and text messages. And many teens spend much of their time writing through Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and other forms of e-communication (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008). However, according to Applebee and Langer (2009), "writing seems to have evaporated from public concern" (p. 27). They argue that academic writing has taken a back-burner to math and science. They also assert that educators, who know that students will need proficient writing skills for college and the workplace, have a responsibility to ensure that students get what they need. With the focus on

aligning standards and instruction as education's interest at the time, Applebee and Langer argue that special attention should be given to the "frequency, length, and types of writing students are asked to do" (p. 27).

Writing instruction in school has been a topic of concern for many years. And, there is no one way to teaching writing as is evidenced by the many empirical studies that claim success using various methods. What is apparent, however, is the need for students to become better writers. Writing is an important tool without which a person's academic and professional growth is limited (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Many teens and their parents also believe that writing is an important tool for future success (Lenhart et al., 2008). However, in schools, high school in particular, there has been an achievement gap in writing among genders, racial groups, and socioeconomic statuses. Some blame this gap on tracking.

Tracking

Tracking – lumping students together by curriculum (Broussard & Joseph, 1998) – in American schools began as early as 1880 as a result of more working-class students enrolling in school, thus forming a population of citizens geared toward blue-collar labor (Perlmann, 1985, p.29). To prepare these students, a new curriculum was developed and those scoring in a particular range on IQ tests were ushered into the course of study "best suited for them" (Perlmann, 1985, p. 29). Since that time, tracking, or ability grouping, has been used as a means of segregating groups of students based on their academic performance (Worthy, Hungerford-Kresser, & Hampton, 2009). Although many schools claim that students are not tracked, tracking still exists under the guise of "levels" of subjects, such as Advanced Placement (AP), honors, advanced, and "regular" or standard English and other required school subjects (Worthy et al., 2009).

Some proponents of tracking suggest that the problem of tracking is not the grouping of students by ability. Instead, they suggest that the problem lies with teachers and administrators whose perceptions of these students' abilities hinder them from providing the best education possible to these students (Dana, 1991). Dana (1991) argues that "[a]bility grouping, if utilized properly, can and does help children to learn more effectively than heterogeneous grouping." Conversely, it is the educational "malpractice" that is at fault (Dana, 1991); that is, unequal teaching practices among groups and disproportionate student placement into groups. Other proponents suggest that tracking is helpful because it reduces the gap between low-achieving students and high-achieving students, while helping the low-achievers to not feel inferior to their high-achieving counterparts (Barquet, 1992a). At the same time, Barquet (1992a) reports that proponents argue that the high-achieving students may not feel that they are being slowed down by the low-achievers.

Tracking Inequalities

Bates (1992) asserts that the problem of tracking originated with the unfair placement of students. Some students were placed in lower tracks simply because of their race or ethnicity. Students of low-income families and ethnic minority groups were given the opportunity to get a "head start" with the Head Start program that began in the 1960s with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Mehan, Datnow, Bratton, Tellez, Friedlaender, & Ngo, 1992). The program hoped to level the field so that all might achieve. However, Mehan et al. (1992) assert that such programs served a remedial purpose with a curriculum that was "often reduced in scope, content, and pace and [was] delivered to students in simpler form at a slower pace" (p. 2). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 holds schools accountable for the academic achievement of students in all subgroups within any particular school (e.g. White, Black,

Hispanic, Asian, free or reduced lunch, students with special needs). All students are held to the same standards regardless of their subgroup affiliation, and NCLB "expects all student subgroups, public schools, and LEAs [Local Education Agencies] to reach proficiency by 2013-14" (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Therefore, students in each subgroup in each track should be exposed to opportunities to achieve the same learning and success.

However, as Broussard and Joseph (1998) note, that does not always occur in the lower track classes. Barquet (1992b) argues that teachers of low-track students do not have the same high expectations as those of high-track students. As Burnett (1995) notes, lower-achieving students are often required to memorize and recall information instead of being required to analyze information they have received and apply it. Many times, low-track students are merely required to do the minimum, to only attain the "lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, and application" (Barquet, 1992b, p. 5). Broussard and Joseph (1998) consider the disenfranchisement of these students a form of "educational neglect" and "educational child abuse." Tracking has been blamed, in part, for the achievement gap that exists between poor minority students and those whose family backgrounds advantage them in school (Barquet, 1992b). Crosby and Owens (1993) link low-track placement to "lower educational attainment and higher dropout rates" (p. 3). In a 1997 evaluation of the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing (McLean, Snyder, Abbott, Reid, Ernest, & Heath, 1997), researchers learned that students at higher-performing schools had teachers who placed greater emphasis on writing all year as opposed to students' teachers at low-performing schools. Despite numerous efforts to close the gap that exists between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, Applebee and Langer (2009) assert that the gap remains.

Research has indicated that students in higher track classes not only begin the semester or year at a higher level than lower track students but also gain more academically than those in lower track classes (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Gamoran, 1992). Some may suggest that students in higher level classes are on the college track, that they are more likely than their counterparts to attend institutions of higher learning. However, many students in lower track classes do indeed attend college. The low-income students that Perlmann (1985) spoke of were further marginalized by English composition in the United States, which "emerged as a gatekeeping mechanism for immigrants and the increasing portion of working class students attempting to make their way into secondary and higher education at the end of the nineteenth century" (Heath 1993, p. 116). Therefore, it is no surprise that many of the students taking remedial writing courses in college are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mehan et al. (1992) note that many of these students do not experience the same level of success as those who are from more privileged backgrounds.

Colleges are seeing first-hand the effects of tracking in the high school system. In 1985, Wright's survey of over 2,700 institutions of higher education reported that 21% of all college freshmen took a remedial writing course. In 1998, almost 75% of colleges and universities offered remedial courses because many students were arriving ill-prepared for college-level work (Knudson, 1998). Today, many students are *required* to take these remedial courses as college freshmen before they can advance to the regular program. According to ACT's Policy Implications for 2005-2006, nearly 67% of postsecondary instructors said that their state's curriculum standards were ill-preparing students for college-level work in English/writing. Due in part to the disconnect between what high schools teach and what colleges expect, George Washington University has instituted a mandatory remediation program in which students are

required to take a four-credit introductory writing course and two subsequent writing courses over the student's next three years (Beil & Knight, 2007). They report that the purpose of the program was "to promote student engagement, scholarship, and critical thinking skills through the development and practice of good writing" (p. 6). Such instruction should occur with all students. Therefore, it has become necessary to look at the instruction students are receiving in low-track classes.

In Watanabe's (2008) ethnographic study of tracking in seventh grade language arts classes in North Carolina, the findings indicated that students in "regular" classes received more test preparation – instruction that is geared toward passing state-mandated assessments – than students in "academically gifted" classes. The researcher also noted that "Students in 'academically gifted' classes engaged in different writing styles, beyond the five paragraph essay the writing test demanded, compared to students in the 'regular' classes" (Watanabe, 2008, p. 502). Students in the regular classes also had more in-class writing time with the teacher and fewer opportunities for independent projects. Several researchers and practitioners (Albertson, 2007; Foley, 1989; Hillocks, 2003; Wesley, 2000) see the five-paragraph theme (FPT) as a means of reducing students' creativity and hindering their writing progress.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) showed that knowledge is constructed socially. That is, students learn from their social environments. According to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, what a child can do independently without any assistance is his or her actual developmental level. However, what a child can do only with assistance is within his or her zone of proximal development. These "functions have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation" (p. 86). Within this concept, Vygotsky argues that the child must be mature enough to handle the information that is being presented in the zone. For example, Vygotsky makes the argument that

a child learning math can reasonably imitate his or her teacher who is working a problem that is within the child's developmental range. He may not, however, be able to imitate the teacher who is working a higher level problem that is not within the child's developmental reach. Even so, Vygotsky claims that learning takes place within that zone. His zone of proximal development shows the link between what a child knows and what he is capable of learning through guidance. Vygotsky maintains that "children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities" (p. 88). The current study served as a means to take students in grade-level, or regular, courses and provide them with instruction that encourages their writing such that they may become better writers. Because these students are often relegated to a formula for writing – that is, the lower expectation of writing – this research attempts to move these students – through a type of imitation – beyond what is commonly assumed as their ceiling of ability.

To guide this task, two research questions were devised as follows:

1. To what extent will high school juniors who receive coping and mastery models differ in their overall essay writing scores (as assessed by a teacher-made grading scale) from high school juniors who do not receive those accommodations?

2. To what extent will high school juniors who receive coping and mastery models write essays that do not adhere to the five-paragraph length as opposed to high school juniors who do not receive those accommodations?

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of the Essay

The essay, or theme or composition (Heath, 1993), dates back as early as the late 1500s

when Montaigne, who is perhaps the first known essayist, wrote his collection titled *Essais*

(Essays) while living in solitude in a tower, much unlike the writing conditions of today's

students. In his anthology, Montaigne's works were many and hinged upon his own personal

thoughts and beliefs (McGurk, 1980). Montaigne's essay style was brief as he preferred that the

reader leave with a desire for more from the writer. Francis Bacon later in the same century

wrote essays that also exhibited brevity, as he called them "brief notes."

Heath (1993) gives a precise history of the essay, noting that the genre was borne of the

epigram – a short, witty poem – and has grown into what we know today as "the vehicle through

which teachers expect students to display knowledge and to argue a single point or hypothesis"

(p. 105). Heath also reports that the essay is widely used as assignments in high school, as

requirements for admission to colleges, and as evidence of writing ability in freshman English

composition courses. It is also used for end-of-course exams and a plethora of other purposes.

With the essay's wide use, it has been difficult to pinpoint what a good essay is. It spans

across many disciplines and has a multiplicity of forms. Textbooks published over the past 73

years are very similar in their descriptions of what good writing is. That is, until the 1970s when

the focus shifted from the written *product* to the writing *process* (National Writing Project &

Nagin, 2006). Nevertheless, Heath (1993) points out that the essay has been expected to be

concise, clear, brief, and straightforward. Dermer, Lopez, and Messling (2009) argue that

concision – that is, writing that avoids wordiness – is a desirable feature of good writing. Their study looked at a computer-aided training software that helped upper level psychology students increase their written fluency, focusing on concision.

Birth of the Five-Paragraph Essay

The brevity of the essays that Dermer, Lopez, and Messling (2009) and Heath (1993) discuss may have been birthed by the brief essays of Montaigne and Bacon. These essays may have, in turn, been the catalyst for the five-paragraph theme (FPT) or five-paragraph essay. It is unclear when the FPT became a classroom staple; however, examples of formulaic writing with three, four, or five paragraphs date back as early as the late 1800s, perhaps earlier.

A 1936 college textbook (Marks) states that no formulas exist for writing. Marks argues that formulas produce dry writing and that students come to the writing task expecting the teacher to give them a blueprint to follow. More recent textbooks, however, abound with examples of how to set up and write an essay. They include the format – the FPT – that is widely accepted but also widely criticized. Daikin (1947) claims that an essay is writing that comes from one's own need to express him- or herself. However, he suggests that teachers set a number of words for advanced writers and three to five paragraphs for basic writers. He also suggests that teachers should require students to write a list of points to which they will write a paragraph for each (totaling four points), then "the result will be a well-planned" (p. 154) essay.

Martin (1974) suggests that teachers of freshman composition encourage the use of the 500-word theme in which students incorporate three reasons to support their thesis statements. Nunnally (1991) defines formulaic writing, more specifically the five-paragraph theme, as "(1) an introductory paragraph moving from a generality to an explicit thesis statement and announcement of three points in support of that thesis, (2) three middle paragraphs, each of

which begins with a topic sentence (with a minimum of three sentences in most models), and (3) a concluding paragraph restating the thesis and points" (p. 67).

The FPT has met wide opposition from both teachers and researchers. It is often blamed for students not being able to expand their thinking because it allegedly requires them to box their thoughts into pre-selected slots. Lindemann (1995) argues that it is difficult to wean the student from the FPT that may have been introduced as a starting point but was not taught that other choices do exist beyond those five paragraphs. It "might lead a beginning writer to leave out the *heart* of his or her piece: the chance for the reader to discover what the author discovered during the writing process" (VanDeWeghe, 2008, p. 98).

Wesley (2000) also disparages the FPT, asserting that teachers who rely on it are "complacent," accepting the FPT as a nurturing tool when it actually "stunts the growth of human minds" (p. 57). Wesley points out that many students, as well as their teachers, look to the FPT as the premier method for writing. Wesley also argues that the FPT is a strict structure that "dissuades students from practicing the rhetorical analysis necessary for them to become critical thinkers" (p. 58). One particular assignment asked twelfth grade English students to choose a trait that a character from three different stories shared. Wesley then had the students write a comparative analysis using the FPT format. Wesley stated that in the example she reproduced in her article, the thesis statement followed the format, but it did not show much "analytical development within the body of the essay" (p. 58). In short, Wesley argues that the FPT does not allow students to expand their thinking.

Albertson (2007) echoes Wesley's concern, stating that formulaic writing "theoretically limits writers' abilities to discover or invent the best form for their ideas" (p. 435). While Nunnally (1991) applauds the FPT for helping students perform better on standardized writing

assessments, Albertson blames such high-stakes tests for perpetuating the problems of formulaic writing, claiming that it encourages teachers to teach only what is on the test.

Wiley (2000), a practitioner, argues that formulaic writing "hinder[s] students from exploring their ideas, reactions, and interpretations" (p. 64). He particularly opposes the Jane Schaffer method in which students write eight sentences for each of two body paragraphs containing a topic sentence, two concrete details, and two sentences of commentary for each concrete detail. Although Wiley acknowledges that students may be successful in writing this particular type of essay, he notes that teachers and students may be at a loss when determining how to move beyond this format. After speaking with some of the teachers of this method, Wiley learned that some of them felt that students in grades nine and ten would benefit from such a rigorous structure but that students in grades eleven and above should move beyond the formula.

Sitler (1993) reports that many college instructors agree that they expect first-year students to be able to write essays with a clear introduction in which the thesis is stated, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. Yet, Foley (1989) argues that college professors are constantly having to "un-teach" what high school teachers have taught. She maintains that the five-paragraph essay "deters" thinking, focusing simply on the structure of the text instead of the content. Foley also suggests that formulaic writing does not prepare students for academic writing as well as writing for the real world. In lieu of a rigid formula to which students must adhere, Foley (1989) offers to introduce students to organizational patterns (e.g. chronological order, spatial order, emphatic order, etc.). Using these patterns, Foley argues, is not formulaic. Instead, it is a means of organizing one's essay and each pattern can be woven into another. It is not a rigid box that students simply fill with facts.

Other varieties of formulaic writing exist, such as the three-paragraph essay and the four-paragraph essay as well as forms in disciplines other than language arts. However, the FPT remains one of the most prevalent genres for writing in the language arts curriculum.

Despite extensive resistance toward the five-paragraph essay, the form is still widely used and accepted in many areas. Speer (1995) teaches the FPT as a means of sparking conversation about what compositions could look like. He revisits Foley's (1989) argument against the FPT and finds that the formula could be "useful for specific purposes and audiences" (p. 25), yet he is hesitant to fully support using the FPT.

Others applaud the FPT's efforts to scaffold students' writing and teach students the "basics" of writing essays. With such enmity between formulaic writing and its non-formulaic counterparts, one could only wonder why the five-paragraph essay persists. Bernabei (2007) suggests that the answer rests in classrooms with thirty or more students. The teachers do not have the time to read more than five paragraphs from each student, and in some cases, the teachers do not know any alternatives. Therefore, through years of arguing both for and against it, the FPT has managed to maintain its popularity with writing teachers and with students.

In a Google search for "five paragraph essay," over one million hits occurred in less than one second, giving notice that this formula is well-known and widely used. Many of the sites suggested ways of teaching the five-paragraph essay. There were several homework help sites, high school sponsored sites, textbook sites, and blogs. Even YouTube hosts a number of educational videos demonstrating the teaching of the FPT. Most notable, however, was the attitude behind the college-sponsored sites. College websites that seemed to promote the use of the FPT were mainly small colleges or community/junior colleges (e.g. St. Michael's College, Dallas Baptist University, Camden County College, Sandhills Community College, and Palomar

College), while those who opposed the FPT were larger universities (e.g. Loyola Marymount University, California State Polytechnic University, and Dartmouth College). Along with this finding, Parsad and Lewis (2003) report that two-year public colleges are "more likely than public or private four-year institutions to offer remedial services" (p. iv). They also reported that 28% of first-semester freshmen in fall 2000 enrolled in a remediation course (reading, math, and writing). This phenomenon could perhaps be traced back to the tracking problem in that students in lower track classes (those that may be prodded to attend community colleges) receive less challenging writing instruction than those in higher track classes (those who may be prodded to attend large universities).

Standardized Testing and the Five-Paragraph Theme

The five-paragraph theme is not only used with high school students, but it is also used with students of all ages. Chaney (2007) suggests that students as early as third grade be taught the FPT using five-circle planning where each circle represents a paragraph: introduction, details, and conclusion. By using this approach, Chaney reports that students performed above average on their state's writing assessment.

The design of state writing assessments, specifically the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing (ADAW), and of the ACT exacerbates the disadvantage of being on a low-achieving academic track, particularly as it relates to writing. In Hillocks's (2003) survey of five states' writing assessments (Illinois, Kentucky, New York, Oregon, and Texas), he insists that writing assessments drive instruction and that students receive higher scores for essays that follow the FPT format. The ubiquitous FPT is the solution many high school English teachers look to in order to prepare their students for these assessments (Smagorinsky, 2007). These assessments are generally timed, one-shot tests, meaning they offer no time for revision. Students are required to

write in a given amount of time and then turn in the essay. In Applebee and Langer's (2009) review of NAEP data from 1984-2007, the researchers concluded that there is a disconnect between writing instruction and assessment's "emphasis on on-demand writing" (p. 26). This, in turn, may be a cause for teachers resorting to the less time-consuming FPT. Applebee and Langer argue that state assessments "may be shifting attention away from a broad program of writing instruction toward a much narrower focus on how best to answer particular types of test questions" (p. 26). According to Hillocks (2003), the Illinois state writing assessment criterion on *focus* admitted that it requires the thesis be stated at the opening of the essay "and that 'major points of support are explicitly previewed in the opening'," which may receive a score of 6 – the highest. Those who choose to write the main point later (to create suspense) may receive a score of 4. Although the state later changed that criterion, the only example of a 6 paper the state presented was of an FPT that adhered to the previous criterion.

The ADAW has a similar set of examples for expository essays. The first of three examples was five paragraphs and received a score of 3 (4 is the highest). The second was one long paragraph which received a 2, and the third was five paragraphs and received a 4 (ADAW Inservice Workshop, 2004). Les Perelman who directs the undergraduate writing program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology criticized the SAT's essay portion, attacking its scoring practices that seem to push the FPT (Wertheimer, 2005). In this interview, Perelman argued that scoring of the SAT writing assessment was based on length. He could simply look at the length of the paper, guess the score, and he would be correct. He also claimed that most colleges spend the first year "deprogramming" students from the FPT. Kobrin, Deng, and Shaw (2007) argue that criticism towards the SAT's scoring policies is unwarranted. They speak against those who suggest that the SAT gives higher scores to essays that are at least five paragraphs. In their study,

Kobrin, Deng, and Shaw (2007) found that there is a correlation between the length of the essay and the higher essay score. However, they argue that the correlation does not mean that higher scores are given only to essays with five paragraphs. What they do note is that "a certain length is needed to effectively develop a point of view on the issue presented in the essay prompt, and this is one of the aspects taken into account in the scoring" (p. 11). Yet, even the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007) gives a five-paragraph essay as an example of an "excellent" response.

Although the FPT is met with some resistance, others suggest that such writing can be useful as a guide (Perrin, 2000) or as a means of earning proficient scores on standardized writing assessments (Nunnaly, 1991; VanDeWeghe, 2008). Perrin (2000) compares the FPT to driving. When first learning to drive, the student is taught to place one hand on 10:00 and the other on 2:00. This helps to teach the student to drive. Once he or she is comfortable with driving, then he or she may place one hand on 12:00 or 6:00. Perrin (2000) further notes that when the driver is in adverse driving conditions or the driver is lost, then he or she often returns to the basic 10:00/2:00 positions. So it is with writing.

Kamrath (2000) discusses the need for teaching structure to beginning writers. She argues that one must know the rules in order to break them. That is, students should learn how to structure an essay, including the five-paragraph theme. By doing so, we as teachers offer the student a guide which they can themselves modify as they become more proficient writers. She refers to theorists Vygotsky and Bruner in that they advocated starting where the child is and scaffolding their knowledge to where he or she should be.

What has been most intriguing throughout the literature is that most essays are in fact a form of the FPT in that they begin with an introduction in which there is a thesis stated

somewhere. The essay then moves to supporting paragraphs and ends with a conclusion. Wesley (2000) posits that the FPT stunts students' growth and that teachers should show students that there is more than just the FPT. However, Wesley further states that she is "not suggesting that we abandon the principles of unity, coherence, and development that the five paragraph theme purports to teach. Rather, I suggest that we continue to teach the essay as a rhetorical form with three units – an introduction, a body, and a conclusion" (p. 60). This argument seems contradictory. What the argument should be, perhaps, is that students are often not taught other genres or modes of writing. Instead, many teachers use the FPT for *every* assignment when there are many ways of expressing opinions and showing evidence of what students have learned. Tchudi (1986) listed numerous genres of writing that students can employ to demonstrate that objectives have been learned or mastered. Tchudi's list includes (but is not limited to) edited journals, biographical sketches, letters, feature articles, annotations, directions, minutes, stories, and commentaries. Consequently, Wiley (2000) suggests that teachers approach the FPT as one of the many "strategies" of writing. In this manner, students may be less likely to relegate themselves to the box of the FPT.

"Good" Writing versus "Poor" Writing

Despite the noted disadvantages of the FPT, it may still be a viable option to teach for assessment purposes and as a heuristic for inexperienced writers (Nunnally, 1991). It has the elements of brevity and conciseness that both Montaigne and Bacon recommended. Many agencies, schools, and policymakers have made attempts at defining what good writing is as is evidenced by their assessments of student writing abilities that are inherently based on those definitions. Furthermore, the FPT does not have to be synonymous with bad writing.

According to Smit (1991), poor writing may mean

1) that the writing of our students is not well thought out, 2) that it is not clearly

organized, 3) that it is not well documented or that it needs more detail or

evidence, 4) that it needs to be better edited, 5) that it needs a more appropriate

tone, 6) that it needs to be better adapted to the circumstances in which it was

written, or simply 7) that it needs to be 'clearer,' whatever that may mean. (p. 2)

Good writing also has freshness and a sense of style and should relate a new topic, or an

old one, in a new way, and it should be clear and vigorous (Reinking & Hart, 1988). In 1963,

Flesch suggested that effective writing be short but not too brief, an explanation that is as

contradictory as it is vague. Over the years, however, the definitions of good writing have

continuously evolved, yet the premises are the same.

In Daiker, Hayes, Morenberg, and Ziegler's (1986) report of teachers' analysis of student

writing, the researchers describe the Early English Composition Assessment Program (EECAP),

which not only offers evaluation of eleventh graders' writing but also provides professional

development for elementary and high school teachers. During the EECAP weekend professional

development, over 70 teachers come together to discuss and rate essays written by high school

juniors. During the 1986 session, teachers rated essays on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) and

discussed their reasons for giving such scores. According to the raters, the 6 papers were

particularly good because they were vivid, aware of voice and audience, organized, coherent, and

fluent (flowed well). Moreover, one rater stated that a strong point of the 6 paper is its "'balance

between creativity and rigidity of form'" (Daiker et al., 1986, p. 15).

NAEP's writing assessment features writing tasks that require students to explain,

persuade, and describe (Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008). By writing essays, letters, and

stories, NAEP "emphasizes that good writers can communicate effectively in a variety of styles.

In addition, effective writing requires a thoughtful approach that includes composing and revising" (Salahu-Din et al., 2008, p. 4).

NAEP describes three levels of writing achievement: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. At the Basic level, students are expected to write an "effective response" in the time given. The ideal response should be creative and should show some analytical thinking. Details should support and develop the main idea, and grammar/spelling should not impede the meaning (Salahu-Din et al., 2008, p. 43).

At the Proficient level, students' writing should go beyond Basic in that it shows a "clear understanding of the writing task" (Salahu-Din et al., 2008, p. 43). Precise language, consistent theme, variety of sentence structure, and few grammatical/mechanical errors are characteristic of the Proficient response.

Advanced responses go far beyond both Basic and Proficient. These responses show use of literary strategies, good craft, and audience awareness.

According to NAEP's 2008 report, students performed better on the 2007 writing assessment than in previous years – 2002 and 1998. NAEP reports that "the average writing score [at grade 12 in 2007] was five points higher than in 2002 and three points higher than in 1998" (2). In 2007, 82% of 12th graders performed at or above the Basic level – an 8% increase from 2002. This gives teachers some hope, at least, that student writing is headed in the right direction.

Marks (1936) offers six critical questions to assess an essay's attributes:

1. Have I stuck firmly to my subject? [ideas and organization]…

2. Have I gone from one idea to the next without a break and without confusion? [ideas and sentence fluency]…

3. Are the parts of my theme so arranged that my material is most effectively presented? [organization]…

4. Have I at any time shifted my point of view, and, if so, was there a purpose back of that shift, and is the purpose unmistakably clear to any reader? [voice]…

5. Is my theme as a whole *clear*, and is every detail clear? Have I remembered, in other words, that I am writing for an ignorant audience? [ideas and word choice]…

6. Is my theme entirely *free from technical errors*? [conventions]…

These six questions Marks (1936) asks are perhaps the catalyst for the six-trait writing model. Each of the questions could be directly linked to the six traits (as bracketed above): ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

The 6-trait writing rubric, developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (now Education Northwest), gives the following as effective writing according to each trait. Students writing according to these guidelines would receive a score from 1 (the lowest) to 6 (the highest).

- Ideas – maintains reader engagement; focused and clear; contains anecdotes and details.

- Organization – compelling structure aids reader through the text

- Voice – aware of audience and invites reader to the text in compelling manner

- Word choice – words engage the reader; precise and natural

- Sentence fluency – varied sentence structure with easy flow

- Conventions – effective use of grammar and mechanics; very few errors

Moreover, "good" writing is writing that is concise, thoughtful, and clear. It presents the author's ideas in a manner that is fresh, not conforming to standard patterns for writing, and showing

control throughout the piece.

Length and Fluency

Although the five-paragraph essay is criticized for its brief length, it may be a tool for writers to build on. Every essay can be a variation of the five-paragraph theme. It may not have three points, but it does support its thesis with a number of points. Every essay has paragraphs that support the thesis, just as the FPT does. The matter is not always the format – it is often the length that college professors argue about. Many of them do not want a paper that *appears* to follow a format or that *appears* to simply be a fill-in-the-paragraphs. In the 1970s and 1980s, fluency and length seemed to be synonymous. It was important that essays be long enough to warrant full coverage of the topic being discussed. Applebee and Langer (2009) argue that most students are not writing lengthier essays. They report that "some 40% of twelfth-grade students … report never or hardly ever being asked to write a paper of three pages or more" (p. 26). Applebee and Langer argue that longer writing allows students to explore concepts in depth as well as prepares them for the rigors of college. Length was and still is in many cases an important factor in what makes an essay good. More recently, however, fluency has been defined as the flow of sentences within the essay (Spandel, 2005). NAEP's assessment in 1996 showed a decrease in the percentage of complex/compound sentences, which affects students' fluency. Their word and sentence count, however, increased.

In Beil and Knight's (2007) survey of first-year students at George Washington University, they learned that many students had not been required to write lengthy papers in high school. Instead, they had mainly been relegated to the FPT. Sanoff's (2006) survey of high school teachers' and college professors' perceptions of high school students' college readiness

also notes that professors are dismayed at the lack of length required in high school writing. According to Sanoff (2006), 25% of high school English teachers "never assign longer papers."

In teaching students how to write research papers, Horwitz (2007) argues that many first-year college students are not prepared for the types of writing that colleges require. Horwitz insists that high schools can assist colleges in several ways, one of which is not assigning longer papers. Horwitz (2007) suggests that the colleges themselves can help students learn to write lengthier papers and claims that "assigning longer papers [in high school] before the basic research skills are developed will retard students' development and put unnecessary pressure on them to plagiarize to make the page length" (para. 10).

Despite Horwitz's assertion, many teachers look for length when assessing student writing. Daiker, Hayes, Morenberg, and Ziegler (1986) found that some high school English teachers highly value the length of students' essays. In their analysis of teachers' evaluations of student essay writing, Daiker et al. (1986) learned that the teachers involved in the study "rewarded length and development" (p.15). They do also note that facets of essay writing such as elaboration, details, and examples are also key to developing a sound essay and that length is a determining factor that leads the writer to those facets of the writing.

According to VanDeWeghe (2008), the "heart" of the essay is left out when students confine themselves to five paragraphs. VanDeWeghe suggests that the FPT "fall[s] short of helping [students] offer *a cogent discussion of their thoughts.* Worse, strict adherence to the FPT may actually limit students' development of complex thinking" (p. 99).

The current study will look at expanding the five-paragraph theme so that students move beyond the "fill-in-the-blanks" format and stretch their writing capabilities. Daiker et al. (1986) report that a rater's comment on the "'balance between creativity and rigidity of form'" (p. 15) is

paramount to writing good papers. VanDeWeghe (2008) and Dean (2000) echo this notion, asserting that the use of narrative is a useful tool in making the FPT better. More importantly, VanDeWeghe (2008) indicates that students who seek to be good writers must go beyond the FPT to develop "sophisticated" writing that expounds on the topic.

Why move beyond the FPT? Because, as Lindemann (1995) states, it "rarely appears in the real world" (p. 129). However, that does not suggest that we leave the five-paragraph theme behind. Instead, we will take Vygotsky's zone of proximal development to scaffold students' writing development, showing students how writing can be thought out and put onto paper.

Strategies for Teaching Writing

According to Pressley and Harris (1990), a strategy is a "procedure… for accomplishing academic tasks… [and] can enhance student performance in reading, composing, computation, and problem solving" (p. 31). When teachers implement strategies in their classrooms, they are scaffolding their students' learning in hopes that students will wean themselves of the teachers' assistance as they become more comfortable with the present task.

Steinberg (1996) offers the strategy of allowing students to begin with personal writing. He argues that students generally have difficulties with writing because "they are so used to thinking of school writing as a prescribed formula" (p. 2). Instead of viewing writing as a hierarchy where personal writing is at the bottom, Steinberg maintains that "we need to see these genres [that is, personal, argumentative, analytical] as a continuum" (p. 3). Therefore, Steinberg (1996) begins his classes with the personal narrative, which students write with a focus: how that personal experience has changed them in some way. Steinberg argues that by providing this focus, students are being nudged to creating a main point. Students are then given time to flesh out their ideas, and they write several personal narratives before moving on to other genres of

writing. Steinberg (1996) discovered with his students that "because they had the opportunity to compose a few focused personal narratives, the best arguments – and their subsequent expository and critical pieces – blended personal reflections and narrative with more formal sources of support…As a result, their writing in all genres was more authentic and imaginative, more lively, and original" (p. 6). Essentially, Steinberg argues that students may become more fluent writers once they are given the opportunity to explore what they do know first and to write in a variety of forms.

Slater and Horstman (2002) suggest using a reciprocal teaching strategy that consists of questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. First introduced during reading, the teacher leads the discussion in hopes that the students will grasp the concept and begin to do the reciprocal teaching themselves. The reciprocal teaching strategy involves the following:

1. *Questioning*…generate several questions prompted by the passage just read, and members of the group answer the questions. Students write out the questions… and then write down their individual responses to the questions. They then share their answers with the leader and the group…

2. *Clarifying issues*…students are asked to write down and identify problem sections or ambiguous issues in the text…students are then asked to write out the resolutions to the problems or ambiguous points in the text…

3. *Summarizing*…summarize the text segment. After the summary has been composed orally, students are asked to write down the major claim (main idea) of the summary and then to write down the supporting details…

4. *Predicting*…make predictions about the contents of the upcoming section of

    text…[and] write down their predictions and…compare their written versions. (p.

    165).

Slater and Horstman (2002) posit that with much practice the reciprocal teaching strategy could

be used independently as students write their expository essays. The authors also argue that there

is not enough teacher modeling nor scaffolding and that the reciprocal teaching strategy is a step

in the right direction to accomplishing that goal.

    Perin and Graham (2007) discuss their meta-analysis in which they look at the strength of

writing strategy treatments in fourth through twelfth grades. They discovered eleven strategies

with statistically significant effect sizes, meaning these strategies had a positive effect on

students' learning. These strategies include, but are not limited to, teaching the writing process

(planning, revising, and editing), teaching summarization, making students aware of the goals of

the writing assignment up front, providing word processing as a medium, sentence combining

(which the researchers claim teachers have strayed away from), pre-writing activities, and

emulating models of good writing. In the study of models, Perin and Graham note that this

instructional strategy "resulted in small improvements in writing quality" (p. 464). Many

teachers currently use these strategies, as Perin and Graham note; however, they suggest that

more research is needed to learn more about the effects of these strategies on student writing,

especially at the high school level.

<div align="center">**Teacher Modeling**</div>

    According to Lenhart et al.'s (2008) survey of teenagers, 82% of teens believe their

writing would improve if they were given more in-class time to write essays. One way to bring

more writing into the classroom is through teacher modeling. Teacher modeling is a means of

showing students – step by step – precisely what the teacher experiences and thinks while he or she is writing. It is a means of teaching the student what to do for the current essay as well as subsequent essays. Pressley and Harris (1990) note that teacher modeling lies at the core of good instruction. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) suggest that teachers writing alongside with their students "creates a supportive writing tone" (p. 26). Augsburger (1998) argues that writing with our students lets students know that writing matters. By writing with students, teachers show their students that they, too, are in the same situation as the student.

Read (2010) suggests that modeling helps to "support students as apprentices in writing" (p. 47). Her IMSCI (Inquiry, Modeling, Shared Writing, Collaborative Writing, Independent Writing) method was used with elementary students to help them understand what was expected of them when given a particular type of writing to complete. Two 4th grade teachers assigned a historical fiction writing task during which the students were given the opportunity to build background knowledge as they first read other pieces of historical fiction and then went on a tour of the historical sites in their community. The teachers then modeled on an overhead how to write the historical fiction piece while allowing students to participate in providing information. After students wrote their own, they then shared with their peers, writing revisions in the margins, on sticky notes, and within the text itself. Read argues that modeling for students helps them to see not only the teacher's struggles but also the fact that words "don't just appear – shazam! – on the page" (p. 51).

In Zimmerman and Kitsantas's (2002) study of 72 undergraduate students acquiring writing skill, the researchers discussed students' observation of the writing task as the first level in acquiring new writing skills after which students would then emulate (do what the model did), develop self-control (develop similar writing on their own), and reach self-regulation (adjust

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their writing to account for factors that may not have been present in the model's example). In their study, Zimmerman and Kitsantas also utilized an adult coping model and a mastery model. The coping model was one who made errors as they wrote but improved. The mastery model was one who made no errors. Zimmerman and Kitsantas learned that students benefited greatly from having observed a model and further noted that those who observed the coping model surpassed those who observed the mastery model, and both groups performed better than those who had no model to observe. Teacher modeling has been shown to be effective in other arenas such as Sustained Silent Reading (Methe & Hintze, 2003), food acceptance in pre-schoolers (Hendy & Raudenbush, 2000), and the writing of students in grades 4, 6, and 8 (Muccino et al., 1986). What is not clear, however, is the strategy's effectiveness with high school students, particularly 11th grade students.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of using teacher-modeling as a means of demonstrating to students what a writer does when he or she writes. To accomplish this task, two research questions were devised, as follows:

1. To what extent will high school juniors who receive coping and mastery models differ in their overall essay writing scores (as assessed by a teacher-made grading scale) from high school juniors who do not receive those accommodations?

2. To what extent will high school juniors who receive coping and mastery models write essays that do not adhere to the five-paragraph length as opposed to high school juniors who do not receive those accommodations?

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted at one high school in the southeastern United States serving approximately 1300 students in grades 9 through 12. The population of this high school includes 63% Black, 33% White, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. 57% of all students at this school receive free or reduced lunch, indicating that more than one-half of the population of the school comes from families of a mid- to low economic status.

The participants were students enrolled in each of the researcher's three regular, or standard, English 11 classes during the Fall 2010 semester (Blocks 1, 2, and 3). Each class is a 96-minute block, although first block has an additional fifteen minutes to allow for school-wide Character Education and third block has a 25-minute break for lunch. The students enrolled in the researcher's classes hail from a variety of backgrounds, economic situations, and educational

challenges and strengths. Some students were repeating the course, and others were still classified as 10th graders because of their lack of sufficient credit hours.

Ninth and 10th grade students in Alabama spend much of their writing time preparing for the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing. This test is geared toward formulaic writing as is evidenced by the examples made available to teachers to assist their students in the three modes that are assessed: narrative, persuasive, and expository. By the time students reach 11th grade, many of them are preparing for college and/or the workforce. Often, these places require writing that goes beyond the five-paragraph essay, which is rarely seen in areas outside of academia (Lindemann, 1995). Therefore, 11th grade students on the standard track were the ideal group to look at for this particular study.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principal of the high school at which the researcher is currently employed. To recruit participants, a cooperating teacher explained to the students enrolled in each class that they have an opportunity to be involved in a research study. Students were informed that they would be doing normal class activities − writing essays − and that their teacher would gather this information and use it for the dissertation. The students were also informed that there would be no compensation in the form of money, extra credit, or any other special privileges. Students were given a consent document to then take home to their parents. Students were also given sufficient time to return the consent forms and those who did return the form received a small edible treat.

Pilot Study

The design and questions for the current study were derived from a pilot study the researcher conducted during the Spring 2010 semester. Through this study, two treatments were tested: 1) guided practice during which the researcher wrote sample essays as students

participated in assisting with ideas to put into the essay and 2) example-sharing during which the researcher shared with students an example of an essay she had already written. Because the pilot study did not produce statistically significant results, the researcher chose to do a modeling method, instead of guided practice, with her students during the Fall 2010 semester so that students would be able to see how thoughts developed onto paper in hopes that they would reproduce the procedure.

The Current Study

The current study is a quasi-experimental design with an informal questionnaire in which the researcher applied Zimmerman and Kitsantas's (2002) method of providing a coping model and a mastery model. In their study, Zimmerman and Kitsantas looked at the effectiveness of instruction on students' "writing-revision proficiency, self-efficacy perceptions, intrinsic interest, and self-reactions" (p. 661). They defined a coping model as one who makes errors while demonstrating a skill but promptly correcting the errors. A mastery model, on the other hand, is an "errorless" demonstration of a skill. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2002) learned that students who observed a coping model performed better than those who observed only a mastery model, which they attribute to the coping model's conveyance of more information about implementing strategies.

In the current study, the researcher used a coping model for the 1st block class. Using the overhead projector, the researcher modeled each step of the writing process. The researcher modeled writing for students while making errors and then improving on those errors. In the 2nd block class, the researcher used a mastery model in which she showed students an example that was already at mastery level. The 3rd block class had neither model nor an example. They had to rely on their prior knowledge of essay writing to complete each essay.

Most students are very familiar with the five-paragraph theme format. In Alabama, students have been practicing this structure since fifth grade, the first year they are administered the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing (ADAW). Because this test is geared toward the five-paragraph approach, teachers spend countless hours preparing students to write in this genre. In 10th grade, students practice using prompts, and their teachers assess their students' writing based on the grading scale provided by the ADAW. With this in mind, students in the 11th grade generally write using the FPT format they remember from previous years. Using this prior knowledge, the researcher used the treatments to build upon students' knowledge of writing in an attempt to expand their writing capabilities.

As the teacher of each of the classes, the researcher ensured that all students received the same instruction regardless of their participation in the study. Each class, however, received a different treatment: 1st Block – Coping Model; 2nd Block – Mastery Model; and 3rd Block – Control Group. At the beginning of the semester, students in the researcher's classes were asked what they thought went into a good essay. Students then proceeded to locate important aspects of a good essay in Alice Walker's "My Daughter Smokes." Before students began writing their own essays as well as during the writing process, students in each class received normal grammar and usage instruction such as sentence combining, agreement, and verb usage. They also received instruction on performing close readings of texts, and they were required to write journal entries about common texts – those that were read by all students in each class. These activities were not part of the current study; instead, they were class activities that are required by the Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts.

Instructional Program for Experimental and Control Groups

The control group consisted of one of the researcher's own standard English 11 classes (3rd Block). These students received the same preliminary instruction (i.e. sentence combining, agreement, verb usage, and close reading) before writing their own essays; however, they did not receive any modeling or examples. The Control group wrote essays on the same topics as did the Coping Model and Mastery Model groups. During the writing process, students in the Control group would ask questions just as students in the other groups did. The researcher answered their questions; however, she did not show any examples nor did she do any modeling for this group.

Once the study commenced, students in all groups (n= 41) were given a sample essay (Alice Walker's "My Daughter Smokes"). As a class, the researcher and students read the essay, and students identified structures in the essay that they found intriguing. For example, students pointed out that they could easily determine how the author felt about the topic and that there were more than five paragraphs. Students suggested that the author felt very strongly about the effects of smoking although the author did not directly state that she was against smoking.

For each of the three essays that students were required to write, they were given two articles that addressed opposing views on the same topic. These essays were given on Fridays, and students read them over the weekend. On Mondays, the students would respond to the articles in their journals after which the class would have a discussion about the arguments presented in the text.

Coping Model Group

Day 1 – For essays one and two, the researcher modeled brainstorming for the 1st block class by showing on the overhead how she used a graphic organizer (see Figure 1) to map out her ideas. Students were not allowed to give feedback at this time. As the researcher modeled, she paused to ask herself questions, which she then answered by placing words onto the graphic she

had created. The researcher also made statements to help herself think of what she wanted to put on paper (e.g. "I think I agree with the airport security checking bags but not with body scans."). The researcher often drew lines through ideas she did not like and replaced with ideas that she did like. Once students observed this coping model, they were then instructed to do their own
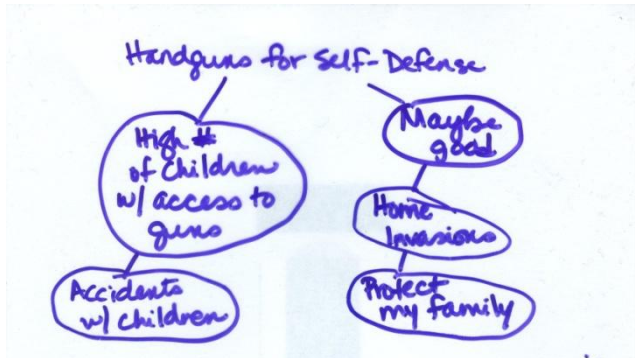

Fig. 1. Brainstorm Map created by researcher for Coping Model group (Essay 2).

Fig. 2. Thesis statement created by researcher for Coping Model group (Essay 2).

brainstorming on the topic, using a similar graphic or one of their own design. After students had approximately 15 minutes to brainstorm, the researcher then demonstrated the process of determining her thesis statement. She told them she would write the words as they came to her even though she may not like some of the words she chose. The researcher asked questions such as "What part of my brainstorming graphic do I want to focus on in this essay?" and "What words could I put in the thesis statement that would make my reader know that I am very passionate about this topic?" The researcher then went back and changed some of the words she did not like (see Figure 2). Afterwards, students worked on their own thesis statements. The researcher's thesis statement was left on the overhead for students to view as they continued writing their own.

Day 2 – The following class day, the researcher demonstrated – as a coping model – how she would create an outline. She talked through how the brainstorm map could be used to help determine ideas to put into the outline. The researcher spoke each step aloud (e.g. "I think I want

to introduce my thesis by explaining some background on safety and privacy."). The researcher also explained how the thesis was broken down into components that could be used for further detail throughout the essay. Students then worked individually, and the researcher circulated the classroom to help clarify any misunderstandings.

Day 3 – The researcher demonstrated – as a coping model – her thoughts as she finished the outline and began writing the introduction paragraph. On the overhead, the researcher wrote the introduction while speaking her thoughts aloud (See Figure 3). Students were then instructed to write their own introductions. Again, the researcher's introduction was left on the overhead for

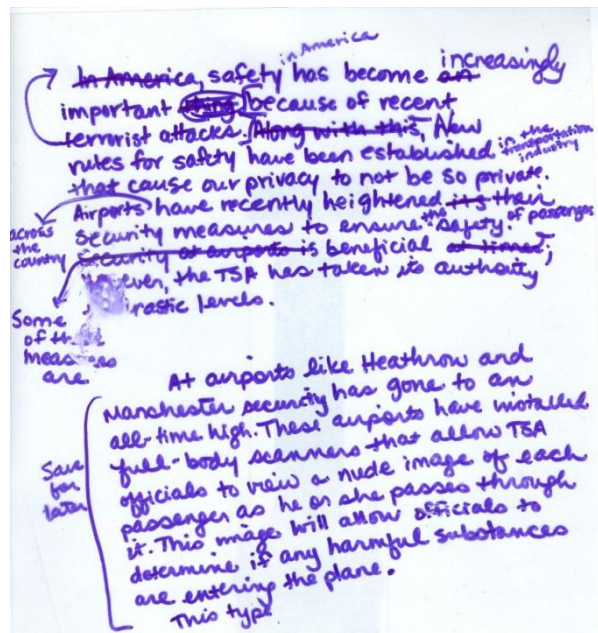*Fig. 3.* Introduction paragraph and a body paragraph created by the researcher for Coping Model group (Essay 1).

students to view if necessary.

Day 4 – The researcher demonstrated – as a coping model – her thoughts as she wrote the body paragraphs and the conclusion to the essay. The researcher made statements such as "I want my reader to think that what I wrote made sense. How can I convey that?" Although she did not

finish writing all of the body paragraphs, the researcher did demonstrate two body paragraphs as well as the conclusion. Students then worked on their body paragraphs.

Day 5 − As a coping model, the researcher proofread and edited her essay, making revisions where necessary. Students were then instructed to do the same.
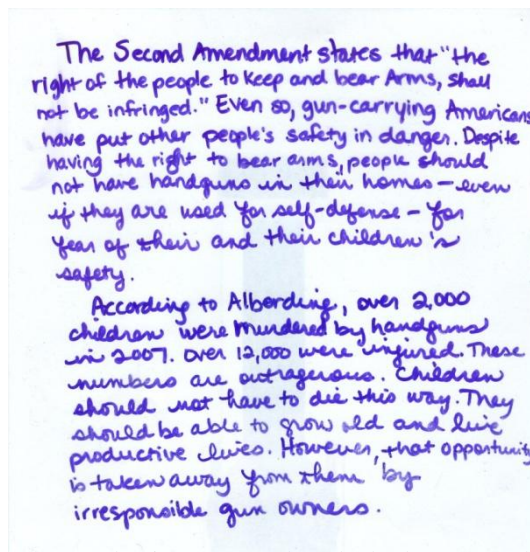
These methods were repeated for the subsequent essay. However, for Essay 2, the researcher also modeled how to read and annotate a text. Students then re-read the assigned articles, looking for information they could use in their essays. The researcher also wrote an entire essay for Essay 2 but modeled only the first two paragraphs and the conclusion. During the revision stage, however, students were able to view the researcher's entire essay. At each stage, the coping model example remained on the overhead as students wrote at their desks.

For Essay 3, less modeling was done. The researcher reminded students what to do at each stage. By the third day of Essay 3, some students were having a bit of difficulty after which the researcher then went to the overhead and modeled the outline followed by the introduction and thesis statement. As students wrote, the researcher continued writing at the overhead so that students who were having trouble could view her writing. The researcher paused and answered questions as necessary. Students had some difficulty with the Essay 3 topic and some students, therefore, did not turn in the completed essay.

Mastery Model Group

During the 2nd block class, students were shown on the overhead a mastery example of what the researcher had already done with the 1st block class on each day of the treatment (See Figure 4). Once students began writing the essay, the researcher circulated the classroom to assist with questions and would refer to the example provided to help guide them along. When the

researcher modeled how to read and annotate a text with the 1st block class, she only showed the

2nd block class the example of her already-annotated text.

Fig. 4. Introduction paragraph and a body paragraph
created by the researcher for Mastery Model group
(Essay 2).

Control Group

Students in this group were not given any examples at which to look nor did the

researcher model for them. These students, however, had to rely on prior knowledge to complete

brainstorming, outlining, and essay-writing themselves. Students did ask questions, and the

researcher answered them without showing any examples and without any modeling.

Students wrote a total of three essays plus a post-test essay. A readability index was

obtained to ensure that each common article was age- and grade-appropriate. The prompts for

each of the essays are as follows:

Essay Prompts

1. While Anny Shaw ("Passengers Laid Bare…") reports that passengers support the use of
   full-body scanners, Gary Stoller – in "Backlash Grows against Full-body Scanners in
   Airports" – states that passengers complain that the new scanners invade their privacy
   (See Appendix A). Write an essay in which you argue for or against heightened security
   measures at airports across the country. Give evidence to support your claim.

2. While the Second Amendment grants all Americans the right to bear arms, Ellen S. Alberding warns us not to be so quick to do so in "Handguns Shouldn't Be a Household Staple." However, in "Not So Fast: Maybe SCOTUS' Chicago Gun Ban Ruling Shouldn't Be Celebrated," Gary Howard argues that Americans should defend our rights as outlined in the Constitution (See Appendix B). Write an essay in which you defend or oppose the use of handguns for self-defense. Give evidence to support your claim.

3. In "Breathing the Filth," Gary Polakovic states that Americans worry over the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill while accepting other daily toxins "as normal." On the other hand, Ed Morrissey argues (in "Obama: Let's spend $2 billion to create 5100 jobs") that President Obama's views of a clean air environment will cost money that the American people should not be willing to spend (See Appendix C). Write an essay in which you defend the need for clean air laws or oppose this type of government spending. Give evidence to support your claim.

4. **Post-Test:** Since the 2009-2010 school year, OHS has instituted a new lunch menu that has had students irate about the offerings in the cafeteria. Many adults, however, argue that school children need healthier school lunches. In Sam Oldenburg's article "Lunch Debate Moves from Cafeterias to Congress," he discusses teachers' and parents' concerns that students are not eating as healthily as they should (See Appendix D). In an essay, argue for or against the need for school cafeterias to offer healthy lunch choices. Give evidence to support your claim.

Data Collection Procedures

When decisions about what goes on in the classroom do not come from the classroom itself, ineffective teaching is the result (Huffman et al., 2003). Furthermore, Turley and Gallagher (2008) suggest that assessments be created in and for the class in which they will be used. Therefore, the researcher created a grading scale based on Turley and Gallagher's example to address the key issues at which this study looks (See Appendix E). The scale includes 9 qualities: Introduction, Organization, Paragraphing, Transitions, Paraphrasing and Quoting, Quality of Evidence, Conclusion, Grammar and Mechanics, and Writing Process. The researcher developed the grading scale through prior knowledge of students and essay writing and took care to make it as user-friendly as possible. A checklist was proposed so that raters could place a

check next to items that were apparent in student essays; however, it became necessary to have some numerical value to each of the items. The scale has a possible 45 points total with 5 being the highest score on each quality and 0 being the lowest, showing that the quality was not attempted.

Students wrote their names on a cover sheet, and essays were collected each Friday with the exception of the post-test, which was collected the same day it was assigned. Essays were given to another teacher who then gave each student a code to ensure anonymity of participants. To produce a more genuine score, three English teachers (including the researcher) served as raters. Two raters scored each essay using the scale the researcher created for these particular essay assignments. The raters met after school and on weekends to score the essays. Because two of the three raters had no knowledge of the common articles that students read, it was sometimes necessary for the raters to ask questions that would help them to better understand a quality on the teacher-made scale. To arrive at a student's score, Rater 1 read the student's essay and circled a score rating for each of the 9 qualities after which she then summed the points and wrote it at the bottom of the scale in the space labeled "Total points." Next, Rater 2 read the same student's essay and circled a score rating for each of the 9 qualities on a clean score sheet. Rater 2 also summed the points given and wrote the total at the bottom of the score sheet. Once all student essays had been read and scored by two raters, an average of the two scores was taken, which then became the student's score. A reliability statistic was calculated to assess dependability of scores, which produced a Chronbach's alpha ranging from .92 to .96 on Essays 1, 2, and 3 and .89 on the Post-test, all of which suggest strong reliability of scores among the raters.

Once essays were collected, they were not given back to the students immediately. The researcher kept all student essays until the end of the semester (approximately 3.5 months), after

which she returned the essays to their owners. Students did receive grades for completing the

assignments.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

A one-way Univariate Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA) was conducted to evaluate

the differences in students' overall essay writing scores when different instructional methods

(coping model, mastery model, control [no coping, no mastery]) are used. The independent

variable, the type of instruction, included three levels: Coping Model, Mastery Model, and No

Coping/No Mastery (Control Group). The dependent variable was the overall essay score on the

post-test. The pre-test (ADAW scores) was used as a covariate. The ANCOVA was not

significant (See Table 1), $F(2, 30) = 1.97$, $p = .16$. The strength of relationship between the

Table 1

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	261.191[a]	3	87.064	4.794	.008	.324
Intercept	288.623	1	288.623	15.891	.000	.346
Treatment	71.722	2	35.861	1.974	.156	.116
PreTest	193.225	1	193.225	10.639	.003	.262
Error	544.868	30	18.162			
Total	14127.500	34				
Corrected Total	806.059	33				

Results of one-way analysis of co-variance. a. R Squared = .324 (Adjusted R Squared = .256)

instructional method and the overall essay score on the post-test, as assessed by η^2, was not

strong, indicating that differing the instructional method does not necessarily generate better

essays. Despite this finding, the means of the post-test scores do show a slight difference among

the groups with the Mastery Model group with the highest mean (m = 21.7) followed by the

Coping Model group (m = 18.8) and the Control group (m = 18.7) (See Table 2).

Table 2

Treatement	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	18.7308	4.31864	13
Mastery Model	21.7083	3.76864	12
Coping Model	18.7778	6.69006	9
Total	19.7941	4.94227	34

Although the one-way ANCOVA did not produce statistically significant results, a look at the number of paragraphs students wrote shows a slightly greater deviation from the five-paragraph essay in the Coping Model group than both the Mastery Model group and the Control group. To get this measure, the researcher counted the number of paragraphs over or under five paragraphs. The researcher then took the absolute value of that number and averaged those values in each of the three treatment groups. The Coping Model group averaged 1.3 paragraphs, meaning these students on average wrote approximately 1.3 paragraphs over or under the standard five paragraphs. The Control group averaged .8 paragraphs, and the Mastery Model group averaged .615 paragraphs.

The average number of paragraphs over or under the standard 5 paragraphs shows that more students in the Coping Model group wrote essays that did not adhere to the standard five paragraphs, showing that these students at least attempted to break away from the formulaic mold. This in itself could be a reason for students in these groups not surpassing the Control group by a statistically significant difference. As many teachers well know, some students struggle with new ways of performing tasks. Those tasks that they are comfortable with, they may perform to a better extent than a task that is currently within their zone of proximal development. Students in the Control group – as shown by the average number of paragraphs

over or under 5 paragraphs – were perhaps more comfortable with the FPT and therefore resorted to that form when they received no examples or modeling.

Reflective Questionnaire

To gain more insight, the researcher asked students to respond to a Reflective Questionnaire (See Appendix F) to learn what students thought of their experiences in each group. On the questionnaire, students were asked if they had ever received similar instruction to what they received during the treatment, what they liked best, what they liked least, if they thought the instruction was helpful, what specifically helped them write their essays, and what they would like their teacher to do differently.

Several students in the Coping Model group wrote that they particularly liked the steps the teacher/researcher took in demonstrating how to formulate the essay. Two students in this group wrote that they liked the way the teacher/researcher "broke it down." One student also wrote that he "liked the way the essay writings were taught because Ms. Burks went through it step by step." A difficulty that the researcher noticed was that some students wanted better essay topics. Some of the students wrote – as well as stated verbally – that they did not like the essay topics. This could, perhaps, be a limitation of this study. Finding topics that students enjoy writing about could be a key factor in students writing better essays.

In the Mastery Model group, one student wrote that she liked the examples that were shown on the overhead because she is "a very visual person, and I need examples and stuff." Other students also liked the examples provided, and two wrote that their former teachers did not show any examples of the essay.

In the Control group, most students wrote that the instruction they received was not any different than what they had received in the past. They also wrote that what they liked least was the writing itself. One student wrote that there were "too many essays; made my brain hurt."

Moreover, several students from each group stated their dissatisfaction with writing in general. There were only three students who wrote that they enjoy writing. Several students in each group also wrote that they thought brainstorming and outlining were helpful to them while writing the essay.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Writing is a skill that is becoming increasingly more important in today's society. From colleges to the work force, professors and employers alike are looking for students and workers who have the skills necessary to complete whatever writing task awaits them. Therefore, it is paramount that students be made knowledgeable that more than the five-paragraph essay exists. In light of this, they must also be able to produce various types of writing regardless of their level of achievement in school.

The current study was conducted to look at the differences in students' overall essay writing scores and essay length when given different instructional methods (Coping Model, Mastery Model, No Coping/No Mastery) in hopes that students would break away from their FPT comfort zone once they were introduced to longer essays that their teacher explicitly modeled for them. The results show that there were little or no differences among the groups, which is interesting in that they support Perin and Graham's (2007) finding that the study of models helped only slightly in writing quality.

Furthermore, it may be more important not only to show students explicitly what to do (modeling) but also to write along with them (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) and offer more opportunities for personal writing (Steinberg, 1996). In doing so, perhaps students will begin to understand writing in less of a school-mandated task mentality.

The one-way ANCOVA did not show statistically significant results. However, the means and deviations from the standard 5 paragraphs indicate that there was a slight difference. The Reflective Questionnaire shows that several of the students valued the instruction they

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received in the Coping and Mastery Model groups. It also shows that they are not used to their teachers showing examples of their own writing. This is one area that should be explored further in the future.

One might argue that the results presented here are reason to continue relegating the "regular" track student to the lower levels of achievement. However, the results presented here are all the more reason to provide lower track students with more opportunities for success. Given more time and feedback, it is likely that these students may have performed better in each group. Providing mastery examples seem to be a way of showing students exactly what is expected of them.

Tracking has been looked down upon for years. But, if teachers of these students take them from where they are and work within their zones of proximal development, these students could possibly compete with their higher level counterparts in essay writing. The findings from this study demonstrate that there is a need to continue working closely with students on their writing.

Limitations

The primary purpose of this study was to identify differences among the instructional practices of coping model, mastery model, and no coping/no mastery. With this in mind, there were several limitations to be addressed. First, the number of participants is an extenuating factor. Although all students in each class performed the assignments (89 students total), only those who returned consent forms were included in the study (n = 41). Having larger numbers would add more power to the analysis.

Another major limitation of this study was that there was no opportunity for students to get formative or summative feedback; that is, comments from the teacher that could possibly

help students perform better on subsequent drafts of the same or different essays. The study was conducted during a 4-week period, during which the students wrote 4 essays (3 practice essays and a post-test). Also, it was not possible to return essays to the students because the researcher wanted participant-status to remain anonymous to ensure she would not be biased when assigning grades. However, the researcher was able to respond to student questions as they wrote their essays.

Third, time was a strong factor. Students at this level (11th grade) have been writing FPT's for several years by this time. For this study, students wrote three essays in three weeks and then used one day for the post-test. Students began groaning by the third essay and were not excited about a post-test. In an ideal situation, students would have several days to write each essay, and students would be able to read comments on their papers and ask questions before moving on to a subsequent essay. Attempting to improve a student's method of writing will most likely require more time than this study was able to provide. In the current study, however, the researcher was under time constraints because of her normal class activities that must go on in spite of the study being conducted.

Fourth, the order in which the experimental groups were arranged may also have been a limitation. Each day, the Coping Model group was first (1st Block), followed by the Mastery Model group (2nd Block), and the Control group (3rd Block). The researcher may have been better prepared for questions from the mastery Model group having already answered questions from the Coping Model group during 1st Block.

Fifth, the teacher-made scale is not a perfect instrument. Since the FPT was an undesirable outcome in this study, perhaps essays that adhered to that formula should have scored less on qualities on the scale, and more perhaps should have been given to essays that

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showed an attempt to do something different, to break away from the formulaic mold. Also, during the rating of the essays, the raters commented that some of the qualities were not exact. For example, some thesis statements may have been unclear (which would have received a score of 1), but the introduction may have had background information (which would have received a score of 3). In cases such as these, the rater generally gave a score of 2 to compensate for both.

Sixth, allowing students to choose essay topics may be a means of sparking more interest than was garnered in the current study. Based on the questions and comments from students during the writing process, the researcher noted that students were very interested in Essay 2 on handguns but not as interested in Essay 1 on full-body scanners and even less interested in Essay 3 on environmental cleanliness. Students seemed to be interested in the Post-test topic (school lunch), but may not have carried that enthusiasm over into the production of the essay because they were exhausted with essay writing by that time.

Seventh, the assumption that students in the 11th grade have the pre-requisite writing skills to perform on grade level was presumed. However, the researcher noted that several students struggled through each essay perhaps as a result of a dearth of knowledge on essay-writing. By 11th grade, students should know how to construct an essay. Nevertheless, as with many other subjects, some students may not be at the developmental level that would allow them to break away from the FPT format.

An eighth limitation rests in the students' developmental stage. According to psychologist Erik Erikson (1963), students this age (16 to 17 years) are trying to find their own identities. They mainly rely on what they can do themselves. At earlier developmental stages, such as the play age (Erikson, 1963), children generally want to copy what adults do. By the time they reach the adolescent stage, however, they want to assert their independence. This

developmental stage may be a reason why modeling does not work particularly well for this age group. Adolescents for the most part want to be independent. Showing them an example of a mastery model as opposed to modeling explicit step-by-step writing strategies is perhaps more helpful to them.

Suggestions for Future Research

Because research has indicated that students in higher track classes not only begin the semester or year at a higher level than lower track students but also gain more academically than those in lower track classes (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Gamoran, 1992), one interesting test would be to determine if students in lower track classes could attain the beginning level of honors and advanced placement students.

Also, future research with longer time and with formative and summative feedback could be beneficial in the field. It would also be helpful to know how teachers' attitudes toward writing affect student writing progress. Barquet (1992b) noted that teachers of low-track students do not have the same high expectations as teachers of high-track students. Therefore, it would be interesting to note teachers' perceptions and compare the achievement of students in classes with a low-expectant teacher and a high-expectant teacher.

Another suggestion for future research is to look at the ways in which students learn. As noted during the current study, at least one student suggested that she learns best when she has a visual upon which she can rely. Using students' learning styles (i.e. visual, kinesthetic, tactile, auditory) to assess how students best learn how to write essays would be helpful in this field.

Implications

The results of the current study support the need for more writing instruction strategies to emerge. The coping model strategy and the mastery model strategy did not provide statistical

data to show students' marked improvement above and beyond the control group. Although the means indicate that students in the mastery model group performed slightly better than those in the control group, the results are not statistically significant at the .05 level.

In the classroom, teachers are often bombarded with overcrowded classrooms and students who are ill-prepared for the grade level. Despite these facts, teachers must put aside their distress and educate those who sit in their classes. Some may argue that perhaps it is too late to try to teach 11th graders how to write in a different style; however, these students can be taught with a little more time and effort on their parts. Although the results were not statistically significant, teachers of writing may still use the coping model method as well as the mastery model on a case-by-case basis for individual students who need extra assistance when writing an essay.

One thing that many fail to remember is that the student has much responsibility in his or her own education. However, Erikson (1963) says that students at the adolescent stage have placed a "moratorium" of sorts on responsibility. In the future, it is my hope that this study will encourage more research on coping and mastery models that allow for more time between the writing tasks. Also, further research should be conducted with a larger sample to determine topics that students may be interested in writing about and then writing essays based on those topics.

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Appendix A
Backlash grows against full-body scanners in airports

By Gary Stoller, **USA TODAY**

Opposition to new full-body imaging machines to screen passengers and the government's deployment of them at
most major airports is growing.

Many frequent fliers complain they're time-consuming or invade their privacy. The world's airlines say they shouldn't be
used for primary security screening. And questions are being raised about possible effects on passengers' health.

"The system takes three to five times as long as walking through a metal detector," says Phil Bush of Atlanta, one of many fliers
on USA TODAY's Road Warriors panel who oppose the machines. "This looks to be yet another disaster waiting to happen."

The machines — dubbed by some fliers as virtual strip searches — were installed at many airports in March after a
Christmas Day airline bombing attempt. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has spent more than $80 million
or about 500 machines, including 133 now at airports. It plans to install about 1,000 by the end of next year.

The machines are running into complaints and questions here and overseas:

•The International Air Transport Association, which represents 250 of the world's airlines, including major U.S. carriers, says the
 TSA lacks "a strategy and a vision" of how the machines fit into a comprehensive checkpoint security plan. "The TSA is
putting the cart before the horse," association spokesman Steve Lott says.

•Security officials in Dubai said this month they wouldn't use the machines because they violate "personal privacy," and information
about their "side effects" on health isn't known.

•Last month, the European Commission said in a report that "a rigorous scientific assessment" of potential health risks is needed
before machines are deployed there. It also said screening methods besides the new machines should be used on pregnant
women, babies, children and people with disabilities.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office said in October that the TSA was deploying the machines without fully testing
 them and assessing whether they could detect "threat items" concealed on various parts of the body. And in March, the

60

office said it "remains unclear" whether they would have detected the explosives that police allege Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab
tried to detonate on a jet bound for Detroit on Christmas.

TSA spokeswoman Kristin Lee says the agency completed testing at the end of last year and is "highly confident" in the
machines' detection capability. She also says their use hasn't slowed screening at airports and that the agency has taken
steps to ensure privacy and safety.

The TSA is deploying two types of machines that can see underneath clothing. One uses a high-speed X-ray beam, and the
other bounces electromagnetic waves off a passenger's body.

Passengers can refuse screening by the machines and receive a pat-down search by a security officer, screening by a metal
detector, or both, the TSA says.
 (http://www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2010-07-13-Abodyscans13_ST_N.htm?csp=obnetwork)

Readability: 8.2
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Passengers laid bare as full body scanners are introduced at Heathrow and Manchester airports

By Anny Shaw
Last updated at 12:15 PM on 3rd February 2010

The introduction of full body scanners at Heathrow and Manchester airports has today caused outrage among civil liberty campaigners who say that they are an invasion of privacy.

Campaigners claim the scanners, which act like a mini radar device 'seeing' beneath ordinary clothing, breach privacy rules under the Human Rights Act.

The exemption of under 18s from being scanned, which was in place during the trial of the machines in Manchester amid fears the scanners could breach child protection laws, has also been removed.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) also warned that using profiling techniques to single out Muslims, Asians and black people for scanning at airports could breach race and religious discrimination laws introduced by the government.

It was also revealed yesterday that air passengers who refuse to submit to a full body scan at Heathrow and Manchester airports will be barred from taking their flights.

The scanners have been introduced in the wake of a failed attempt by 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to blow up a transatlantic jet on Christmas Day.

Airport bosses at Manchester and Heathrow said those selected for scanning are not being chosen on the basis of race, religion or ethnicity.

They will instead scan passengers if they raise the suspicion of security officers following a hand search or unsolved metal detection alarm.

They will also go through if explosive or vapour trace detection equipment causes an alarm to sound or if they request a private search prior to or after passing through the walk-through metal detection equipment.

The first passengers at Manchester Airport who used the scanner backed the controversial measure.

In the first hour after the machine was made compulsory around 60 people were scanned at Manchester.

Andrew Mark, 46, from Wolverhampton, was among the first to be selected.

Mr Mark said: 'We have nothing to hide so it's not a problem. It didn't seem to hold us up either as it only takes a few seconds.'

But another passenger, Pakize Durmaz, 34, called on airport staff to explain to passengers why they had been chosen.

'The process is really easy and I felt comfortable going through it but I didn't really know what they were doing. They told us we had been chosen at random but I think they should give better reasons why people are picked,' she said.

At Heathrow, Richard and Susan Winter described the machines as an invasion of privacy but said they understood why there were being introduced.

The married couple from Folkestone in Kent were flying to Sri Lanka this evening.

Housewife Mrs Winter, 55, said: 'I feel it is incredibly intrusive but this is the price we have to pay in the modern world.

'For security reasons it is a good thing - it is better to do this than let someone creep on with a shoe bomb.

'I feel it will invade my privacy but if it ends up saving lives it is important and worth doing.

'We flew in the aftermath of 9/11 and there was a real air of suspicion between passengers. Hopefully this will eliminate that.'

Mr Winter, a 66-year-old retired chauffeur, added: 'You have got to say yes to it because no-one wants to be blown out of a plane.

'It's an unfortunate necessity - it would be lovely to be in a world with no trouble but there's no avoiding it.'
(http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1247977/Full-body-scanners-introduced-Heathrow-Manchester-airports-Lord-Adonis-seeks-allay-privacy-fears.html)

Readability: 10.9

Shaw, Anny. "Passengers Laid Bare as Full-body Scanners are Introduced at Heathrow and Manchester Airports." *Mail Online*. 3 February 2010. Web. 26 July 2010.

Handguns shouldn't be a household staple
July 9, 2010   *Ellen S. Alberding*

Before Chicagoans take the U.S. Supreme Court up on its invitation to buy a handgun for self-defense, it pays to ask the question: Will having a handgun at home really make my family safer?

Many of us may recall the recent cases involving two Chicago homeowners using guns to protect their families from home invaders. And, rest assure, the gun lobby is quick to remind us of these incidents. But news reports of an 8-year-old girl shot by her 13-year-old brother while playing with guns in their basement, or the mother of four who was shot and killed by her husband, or the 16-year-old who killed himself with his father's gun, are somehow forgotten.

Set the anecdotes aside. There is little scientific evidence of any public health or public safety benefits of privately owned guns. In fact, according to the respected Journal of Trauma, guns in the home are 11 times more likely to be used in suicide attempts and four times more likely to be involved in accidents than used in self-defense.

The most recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that in 2007, more than 2,000 children in the U.S. were killed and another 12,371 were injured by gunfire. For parents, the lesson here is quite simple: Keeping a gun at home puts your children at risk.

Chicago's new handgun ordinance puts in place important precautions for residents who choose to keep guns at home, especially in homes with children. These measures, including requirements for safe storage of guns and the reporting of lost or stolen guns, can help reduce, but not eliminate, the risk.

Parents who believe that they can keep their guns away from their children are just plain wrong. Consider a recent survey of parents and their children at a family health clinic in rural Alabama. Thirty-nine percent of parents who reported that their children did not know the storage location of household guns and 22 percent of parents who reported that their children had never handled a household gun were contradicted by their children's reports. The results were the same even when parents kept guns locked up and discussed gun safety with their children.

Access to guns also makes a huge and tragic difference when a young person attempts suicide. Most studies that have examined the issue have found that in the U.S., access to firearms is associated with increased suicide risk, according to the Harvard School of Public Health's Web site. Most often, youth suicide victims use a firearm belonging to a family member, usually a parent.

A gunshot is quick and irreversible. About 90 percent of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal, compared with 2 percent of drug overdoses and 3 percent of attempts by cutting. Adolescents who experience a moment of despair and act impulsively with easy access to a gun almost always have a deadly result. Adolescents also are likely to survive most other methods of suicide, and nine out of 10 who attempt suicide and survive will not die by suicide at a later date.

Firearms in the home also pose a particular risk to women. According to the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, approximately 300,000 women and children experience violence in their homes each year in Illinois. According to one study, abused women are five times more likely to be killed by their abuser if the abuser owns a firearm.

The truth of the matter, according to Dr. David Hemenway of the Harvard School of Public Health, "is that where there are more guns, there is more death — more homicide, more suicide, and more firearm accidents."

So before you make a potentially deadly decision, please, consider the facts.

Alberding, Ellen. "Handguns Shouldn't Be a Household Staple." *ChicagoTribune.com*. 9 July 2010. Web. 9 July 2010.

Readability: 11.8

(http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/ct-oped-0709-guns-20100709,0,3676797.story?track=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+chicagotribune%2Fopinion+%28Chicago+Tribune+news+-+Opinion%29)

Not So Fast: Maybe SCOTUS' Chicago Gun Ban Ruling Shouldn't Be Celebrated

Gary Howard

Campaign For Liberty

July 2, 2010

This week the Supreme Court of the United States, or SCOTUS, ruled to overturn gun restrictions imposed by the Chicago city government on its citizens. No matter how wrong or misguided you may believe the city of Chicago's gun laws are, the Court's ruling—and the way they came about it is nothing to be pleased about.

The Court's ruling, that the Second Amendment extends to all 50 states, seems like common sense to those of us who see the right to bear arms as a constitutionally-protected right. But I guess the Court needed to spell it out for some lawmakers. There is a problem with this ruling however, and the problem is twofold: 1) how the Court used the 14th Amendment to reach its ruling–which is how many bad Supreme Court decisions have been reached—should make anyone claiming fidelity to the purpose of the Constitution suspicious; 2) celebrating this ruling harms the credibility of those who claim to be in favor of state and local sovereignty.

The 2nd Amendment establishes the right to bear arms as a right that cannot be abridged by the federal government. Read the previous sentence again. Now ask yourself: What was the purpose of the Constitution, and subsequently the Bill of Rights?

The Constitution established the federal government and its powers; the Bill of Rights limited those powers and asserted the rights of individuals and states. Ultimately, the Constitution is in place to protect the individual from infringements imposed by the federal government, not the states. At least that's how things used to be—until the 14th Amendment.

The 14th Amendment brought about the incorporation doctrine, essentially applying the Bill of Rights to the states in the same way they had been applied to the federal government. There is ample debate about whether that is a good or bad thing, which usually depends on if one is for or against a particular issue —which is somewhat of a hypocritical position.

States created their own separate constitutions because they are sovereign entities (an existence having been tentative for some time now). Some of those state constitutions have even stricter limits on government than the U.S. Constitution. It is the right of the states, and localities, to make their own regulations and restrictions regarding any issue. As an example, take the sale of alcohol into consideration. Despite the federal repeal of prohibition in the 1930s, some localities are still 'dry' counties to this day, restricting the sale of alcohol inside of their boundaries. They are within their rights to do so.

As it relates to handgun restrictions, my view as a citizen who believes in gun rights is that gun bans are no good. But as a Constitutional question, from the view of someone who believes in strict limits on federal power, localities are within their rights to place regulations as they see fit on handgun ownership.

Originally, like Justice Thomas, I thought the decision was right, but the use of 14th Amendment as reasoning was suspect to say the least. After some thought, I am leaning even further toward being against this ruling on grounds that it further expands federal power. And if I want to remain consistent about limiting federal power, I must oppose such a ruling.

To assert that the gun ban can be declared void by federal fiat, simply makes the problem of federal overreach even worse. What happens when that same federal judicial power is used to declare something you are in favor of as void?

Readability 11.2

Howard, Gary. "Not So Fast: Maybe SCOTUS' Chicago Gun Ban Ruling Shouldn't Be Celebrated." *Prisonplanet.com*. 2 July 2010. Web. 25 July 2010.

(http://www.prisonplanet.com/not-so-fast-maybe-scotus-chicago-gun-ban-ruling-shouldnt-be-celebrated.html)

Breathing the Filth: Hydrocarbons in the air are more toxic than oil in the gulf.
By Gary Polakovic
July 8, 2010

What a relief it will be when the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico gets plugged, ending the colossal mess caused by gushing crude.

Or will it?

Once the spill stops, oil will resume flowing as it always has, to be burned in engines, released to the sky and breathed deep into our bodies. We know now that these emissions contribute to a longer-term and perhaps ultimately more dangerous form of pollution — climate change.

As deadly as the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe is, the pollution pales in comparison with the hydrocarbons spilling into the air over our cities, farms and highways. The oil spill ranks as the nation's worst environmental disaster only if you ignore the great ongoing spill in the sky.

Air pollution is so ubiquitous that we accept it as part of the modern urban tableau with little fuss. Smog doesn't rivet attention as it did 62 years ago when an inversion layer trapped pollutants in Donora, Penn., killing 20 people in a few days and sickening thousands, or when smog was hazardous for everyone most of the time in Los Angeles. Images of a blazing oil rig and glop-coated birds skew our sense of proportion and risk.

The numbers reveal that the dangers we accept as familiar are worse in the long haul than sudden disasters such as the Deepwater Horizon.

Experts estimate that the oil spill now spews as much as 60,000 barrels of crude a day, equivalent to about 8,820 tons.

Californians alone disgorge about 2,215 tons of hydrocarbons into the air every day. What Deepwater Horizon does to the Gulf of Mexico in one day, we do to the air in four days.

It takes the smoggy Los Angeles region less than two days to match the pollution the Deepwater Horizon blowout produces in one. That is, if you count the 4,740 tons per day of various emissions from combusted fossil fuel such as carbon monoxide, microscopic particles, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds.

Worst-case estimates place the total oil spilled in the gulf at about 126 million gallons over two months. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates the country disgorges that much hydrocarbon pollution to the air in 10 days.

If TV cameras swooped in on Southern California emergency rooms during summer's smoggy days, they would find, instead of dead fish or birds, asthmatic children and elderly patients gasping for breath. A recent study by researchers at Cal State Fullerton shows that at least 3,860 people die prematurely from smog annually in California…

The economic losses resulting from air pollution, measured in missed days of school, lost workdays or healthcare costs, number in the billions of dollars. Yet, unlike the $20-billion restitution fund for victims of the Gulf of Mexico spill, no remuneration exists for victims of hydrocarbons dumped in the air. While the goal in the gulf is to stop the mess, the goal for the air is to limit the discharge to a conscionable level of damage.

It's true that clean-air regulations have led to substantial reductions in smog-forming emissions released to the sky. There are tangible benefits as a result.

But the more we learn about the effects of the great spill in the sky, the more we learn how dangerous the emissions are. Ultrafine particles — so tiny thousands could fit on the dot of this i — from diesel combustion have been linked to heart attacks, birth defects and cancer. And black carbon, or soot, from diesel exhaust is proving to be a major greenhouse pollutant with a unique heat-trapping ability to settle on and heat ice sheets like an electric blanket.

Unlike in the past, when clean-air laws had broad bipartisan support, lately the political will to tackle the great spill in the sky has faltered. President Obama's recent Oval Office speech invoked a national military emergency for oil spill response. However, the country seems more willing to unite against enemies abroad than to respond to threats to our environmental health and safety.

To wit, 47 U.S. senators sought to block the EPA from regulating greenhouse gas emissions last month. Not a single Republican lawmaker supported the energy bill in the Senate, and only eight GOP lawmakers supported the House-approved bill reckoning with greenhouse gas pollutants earlier this year. Half the country was chanting "Drill, baby, drill!" just 18 months ago while Obama and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger called for expanded offshore drilling…

Will the oil spill in the gulf become an inflection point similar the 1969 spill off the Santa Barbara coast, which ignited a groundswell of environmental support? Not until we gain a sense of proportion about all the hydrocarbons we discharge, and a reckoning with our petroleum dependency.

(http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-polakovic-20100708,0,1277509.story?track=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+latimes%2Fnews%2Fopinion%2Fcommentary+%28L.A.+Times+-+Commentary%29)

Polakovic, Gary. "Breathing the Filth: Hydrocarbons in the Air Are More Toxic Than Oil in the Gulf." *L.A.Times*. 8 July 2010. Web. 9 July 2010.

Readability: 12.0

Obama: Let's spend $2 billion to create 5100 jobs
posted at 11:00 am on July 3, 2010 by Ed Morrissey

And I thought Barack Obama's response to the jobs numbers *yesterday* was clueless. Obama proposed spending $800 million to create 5,000 jobs, which would install broadband technology where it hasn't already expanded because of demand, which will cost $160,000 per job. Today, Obama has refined his approach in his weekly address, proposing to spend even more money to create jobs that will mainly disappear:

That's one of the reasons why we're accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy and doubling our use of renewable energy sources like wind and solar power – steps that have the potential to create whole new industries and hundreds of thousands of new jobs in America.

In fact, today, I'm announcing that the Department of Energy is awarding nearly $2 billion in conditional commitments to two solar companies.

The first is Abengoa Solar, a company that has agreed to build one of the largest solar plants in the world right here in the United States. After years of watching companies build things and create jobs overseas, it's good news that we've attracted a company to our shores to build a plant and create jobs right here in America. In the short term, construction will create approximately 1,600 jobs in Arizona. What's more, over 70 percent of the components and products used in construction will be manufactured in the USA, boosting jobs and communities in states up and down the supply chain. Once completed, this plant will be the first large-scale solar plant in the U.S. to actually store the energy it generates for later use – even at night. And it will generate enough clean, renewable energy to power 70,000 homes.

The second company is Abound Solar Manufacturing, which will manufacture advanced solar panels at two new plants, creating more than 2,000 construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs. A Colorado plant is already underway, and an Indiana plant will be built in what's now an empty Chrysler factory. When fully operational, these plants will produce millions of state-of-the-art solar panels each year.

If this is an example of how Obama will sell the green-jobs economy, he'd better hope that the public schools get a lot worse than they already are at teaching math. Obama proposes spending $2 billion to create a total of 5,100 jobs. That will cost **$392,156.87** per job. That kind of money, in the private sector at least, should fund *several* jobs. Heck, even a government bureaucrat costs less than *that;* even at the Department of Transportation, that would cover two and have enough left over for a secretary.

But that's not the only folly in this proposal. Of the 5,100 jobs Obama promises, only 1,500 of them are *permanent* jobs. The others are construction jobs, which will only last as long as the money flows to the project. That means we will spend over **$1.3 *million*** per "permanent" job in building this "green economy," which looks more like a red-ink economy with even a cursory check of the numbers.

And let's say that these 1500 jobs are all great-paying, tax-generating jobs that earn an average of $100,000 per year, and that these folks all pay an effective tax rate of 25%, which is an

incredibly generous calculation. How long will it take to pay back that investment from the permanent jobs created by this effort? Why, only **53 years and 4 months!** And that's only if one doesn't calculate the cost of money over that period of time and ignore the impact of inflation.

We know that the motto of this administration is "never let a good crisis go to waste," but it turns out that the *real* crisis is mathematical illiteracy — and Obama hopes it afflicts enough people to get away with this.

Readability 12.2
Morrissey, Ed. "Obama: Let's Spend $2 Billion to Create 5100 Jobs." *Hotair.com*. 3 July 2010. Web. 25 July 2010.

Lunch Debate Moves from Cafeterias to Congress (abridged)
By Sam Oldenburg
Published May 20, 2010

Cheetos and ginger ale were not what Colorado schoolteacher Mendy Heaps thought her students should be eating for lunch, so she started selling fresh fruit out of an overhead projector cart. Kids, parents and teachers loved it, but the principal put a stop to it.

Principal Robert McMullen told Heaps that her fruit cart had become disruptive to the operations of the school's food services and asked her to stop the fruit cart and focus her energy on teaching language arts. While Heaps ended the fruit cart operation, she hasn't dropped the cause.

"We have to teach these kids to value their health and take care of it," said Heaps.

Heaps isn't alone in her fight to revamp school lunches. Across the country, activists are speaking out about school lunches as Congress considers updating the National School Lunch Program. TV viewers watched Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution on ABC take on school lunches in Huntington, W.Va. Retired military officers argue that school lunches are making young Americans too obese to fight. First lady Michelle Obama has pointed to changes in school lunches as a part of combating childhood obesity.

From Kentucky to Colorado to California and elsewhere, schools are making changes in the nutrition of school lunches. Now, it's up to Congress to decide how change will be implemented on the national level.

In the Boulder Valley School District in Boulder, Colo., change is already under way. Where other schools might serve chicken nuggets, French fries and chocolate milk, a meal here could consist of roast chicken, roast potatoes, a salad bar, organic milk and a whole wheat roll, said Ann Cooper, the district's director of nutrition services.

Chicken nuggets, Popsicles and trans fats don't belong in school lunches, Cooper said. "What of any of that is part of a healthy diet for a child?" she said.

Parents agree that change must come to school lunches; 63 percent of parents of school-age children described the nutritional quality of local school food as "poor" or "only fair" in a national survey conducted by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Dayle Hayes, a registered dietitian and consultant based in Billings, Mont., is also speaking out about school lunches, but she emphasizes the positive. Hayes, who has consulted with education departments in several states, has started a "school meals that rock" initiative. The project's Facebook page describes it as "a counter-revolution to the media bashing of school meals and a tribute to every lunch lady (and gentleman) working to do amazing things for kids' nutrition."

A desire for culinary perfection has overtaken the reality that many of these children are hungry, Hayes said. "People have all sorts of expectations for school meals. They want them to be fresh,

local, organic – yet schools don't have the funding to be able to do that." she said, "I think one of the really key issues here is that school lunches matter most to those who have the least."

A full-price lunch in Bowling Green schools costs $2. Students pay 40 cents for a reduced-price lunch. The school is reimbursed $2.65 for each free lunch served; $2.28 for each reduced-price lunch served; and 25 cents for each full-price lunch served through the United States Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program.

At Dishman-McGinnis, not much goes uneaten. "The kids truly are hungry," Simpson said.

A buzz of conversation fills the gym during lunch as kids sit side by side on benches attached to the lunch tables.

"Here we go, sweeties," cafeteria manager Karen Huffman says to kindergarteners as she ushers them through the lunch line.

"At home I really don't eat a lot," fifth-grader Rashad Durden said. "At lunchtime, I eat a lot."

One thing that did go to waste was second-grader Conner Trowbridge's slice of pizza. "I'm tired of eating pizzas," he said with a sigh. "I have to eat pizza every day at home, and now – pizza." He said his parents buy a lot of pizzas.

"My favorite food at home is cereal and Pop-Tarts," he said. "My favorite food here is carrots."

Fresh fruits and vegetables have become a major focus for the school district. A "garden patch" area has been created in each school's cafeteria line to provide these items. "We let the kids get as much as they want from the garden patch," Simpson said. "They can make a salad if they want… or they could just pick and choose vegetables and fruits."

When the garden patch was started in 2006, students began to experience foods they had never seen before, Simpson said. "We've had kids say they love the little orange things; they've never had a carrot before – a little carrot."

One of the favorite fruits among students is the ugli fruit, a type of tangelo from Jamaica. "They're just like oranges, but they're more better," fourth-grader Sebastian Salkic said.

Not every student was ready to give a thumbs-up to the school's lunches, however. "Sometimes they're nasty; sometimes it ain't," fifth-grader Whitney Miller said. When asked if there was anything she liked about the school lunches, she shook her head no.

Not having dessert every day is the one thing fifth-grader Olivia Humbles said she doesn't like about school lunches.

"When we do have it, it is good," her classmate Tysheona Shannon said.

The variety of fruits also appeals to Shannon. "I like pineapples, bananas and strawberries," she said. "We don't really get pineapples at home."

That emphasis on quality foods has become a trend statewide, said Denise Hagan, Kentucky's division director for nutrition and health services. "There are just so many low-income students, and we realize that because we are such a rural state many kids aren't going to have access to quality foods," she said.

Cooper agrees that more must be done than Lincoln's bill proposes. "This is the social equity issue of our time," she said, citing predictions that most kids will have diabetes before entering high school and will die younger than their parents. "What is it we don't get about having to fix this?"

http://www.upiu.com/articles/lunch-debate-moves-from-cafeterias-to-congress

Oldenburg, Sam. "Lunch Debate Moves from Cafeterias to Congress." *Upiu.com*. 10 May 2010. Web. 16 September 2010.

Persuasive Essay Rubric

	5	4	3	2	1	0
Introduction	Uses creative engagement mechanism; provides background info and clear thesis that prepares reader for what is to come	Provides background info and clear thesis that prepares reader for what is to come	Provides generic background info; has thesis statement	Contains thesis statement with no background information	Thesis statement is unclear	Not attempted
Organization	Ideas presented in an orderly sequence	Ideas presented in a orderly sequence; arrangement is evident, although ideas may wander at times	Some thought to arrangement is evident; does not adhere to ideas in thesis	Poorly arranged; does not adhere to ideas in thesis	Little or no thought given to arrangement; ideas meander throughout essay	Not attempted
Paragraphing	Essay separated into paragraphs that each address the thesis statement	Essay separated into paragraphs; some ideas may be awkwardly placed	Essay separated into a forced five paragraph format; use of five paragraph format is evident	Few or no supporting details	Not separated into paragraphs	Not attempted
Transitions	Useful and genuine	Useful but forced	Awkwardly placed	Few ill used transitions	Transitions not evident	Not attempted
Paraphrasing & Quoting	Accurate use of paraphrasing and quoting	Paraphrasing and quoting is evident; errors are minor	Several paraphrasing and quoting errors	Limited understanding of paraphrasing and quoting	Incorrect paraphrasing and quoting	Not attempted
Quality of Evidence	Details clearly add to the argument, evidence utilized very well	Details add to the argument, but writer relies mainly on personal examples	Some details do not add to the argument	Textual evidence adds very little to the argument	Evidence used does not demonstrate the writer's understanding of the reading(s)	Not attempted
Conclusion	Efficiently reiterates basic points; brings satisfying/creative closure	Reiterates basic points; brings closure	Reiterates basic points; attempts at closure	Does not reiterate basic points; inefficiently attempts at closure	Does not reiterate basic points; does not bring closure	Not attempted
Grammar & Mechanics	Appropriate diction; errors are minor	Appropriate diction; few errors	Shows little thought toward diction; significant errors	Inappropriate diction; many errors	Errors indicate lack of understanding and control of high school grammar/mechanics	Inappropriate diction; errors impede understanding
Writing Process	Outline **AND** graphic used; evidence of drafting, proofreading, and editing	Outline **OR** graphic used; evidence of drafting, proofreading, and editing	Outline/graphic but no draft **OR** draft but no outline/graphic	Minimal pre-writing	Little or no pre-writing	Not attempted

Scoring:

Number of Paragraphs ____

Add scores from each column. Total points ____

Total Points Possible: 45

Reflective Questionnaire

Name _____Block _____

Directions: Recall your experiences in writing essays this past month. Answer each question below.

1. Was the essay writing instruction you received different from what you were used to in the past? If so, what was different?

2. What did you like best about how essay writing was taught to you?

3. What did you like least?

4. Do you think the type of instruction was helpful to you? Why or why not?

5. What do you think specifically helped you while you were writing the essays?

6. What would you like your teacher to do differently next time?

7. Additional Comments: